

HST 203: History of the United States Sp17 (Escobar Meta 41054 41053)

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Forum 2

Taxation

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Taxation

by Joe Escobar - Friday, April 21, 2017, 11:28 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Taxation topic.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which question(s) you are addressing . Do NOT simply leave it RE: Taxation

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Taxation, Three brothers in the real world and my views

by Jeff Johnson - Monday, April 24, 2017, 7:24 PM

While the argument over who should pay what should be discussed the more important argument is what is our government spending all this money on and with all that money why are they having to borrow more. In the real world it wouldn't have been the three brothers who decided to do all the improvements on the street it would have been the local government doing it without asking them then handing them the bill. The rich brother Harry would have moved out into a mansion in Vancouver hiring a lawyer as he left to make sure he didn't pay a dime. The poorest brother Tom having bought a house he couldn't afford end up living in his

car while his wife moves in with her mother. The middle one Dick being the only one left is forced to pay the 30,000 which leaves him with nothing. The city comes back a couple years later with a new bill for another 30,000 saying they had misjudged the cost of the improvement and would like a check tomorrow. Dick having no more money is forced move into the back seat of Tom's car. While the argument over taxation is important I would argue that debt and spending are what we need to pay attention too. Like we learned in class even if we take all the money from the top 1% it would only pay 3% of our debt.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Thoughts on Three Brothers Video

by Julia Tomlinson - Monday, April 24, 2017, 7:56 PM

I felt that the Three Brothers video was a very helpful tool in explaining the progressive tax code that is in place today. Prior to watching this video I had a pretty good handle on the United States tax code, and came away with the belief that it seemed very arbitrary and unfair. This video basically made me realize that in general my previous viewpoint still remains the same, with a better understanding of specific numbers in relation to the different brackets. Overall I still have a negative viewpoint on the current tax code that is in place today. I come from a family of two very hard working parents that raised me to believe that there is no such thing as a free lunch and if you want something you better be willing to work hard for it. It made me angry in the video that Tom expected his older brothers (most specifically Harry) to pay for all the renovations that all three brothers would be benefiting from. Tom and Dick had exactly the same opportunities as Harry, but they choose not to work hard and opted to spend their money instead of investing and saving it. Take from the rich and give to the poor is not a mentality that stopped with Robin Hood, it is one that is still actively practiced today. Unlike this video, all Americans do not have the same IQ or opportunities as other. Sure, in life it generally would be a lot easier to be a Kennedy than Joe Shmo that never graduated high school, but something they can both have in common is strong work ethic and a drive to make money. There are obviously factors that would limit how much time people have to work such as disabilities or raising children, but I do not believe that those that can't work as much should expect and rely on others to take care of them. This is not to say that I feel everyone should be taxed the same amount. I just don't feel that, in the case of the Three Brothers video, Harry should not have to pay 80% of the bill while Tom paid none of it.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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President Coolidge

by Branden Long - Monday, April 24, 2017, 9:07 PM

Overall, do you find yourself agreeing or disagreeing with President Coolidge's position on taxation? Are there specific points he makes that you find either most compelling or lacking merit?

- I agree to the fact that taxes makes a person work for the government for a certain amount of time(Coolidge 1:14). I agree with Coolidge that we do need to decrease the amount the public expends(Coolidge 2:08). The fact that today in America every person who is a

citizen has a debt of \$61,207 to pay off the national debt (<http://www.usdebtclock.org/>) and maybe if we applied something similar we could bring down the national debt.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Three Brothers

by Branden Long - Monday, April 24, 2017, 9:08 PM

Does the Example of the Three Brothers, which provides an explanation of the progressive tax code currently in use, help, hurt, or otherwise influence your understanding of taxation in the United States?

- It makes it simple and clear how the tax system really works in U.S. because of the way they show the formula with the Three Brothers. The fact is that the two younger brothers wanted to benefit themselves (Three Brothers 3:10). Under the tax system most of the money will come from the upper tax brackets, yet if the upper class collapses or the middle class the whole tax system fails.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Does anyone really like taxes?

by Michaella Ensele - Monday, April 24, 2017, 10:26 PM

The example of the three brothers gives an interesting concept. The fact that the more money you make the more money you pay in taxes makes sense in the broad scheme of things but this video makes you think a little more in depth in everyday situations. I try to see it from all sides as much as I can but in this case it is pretty clear to me that the current progressive tax code hurts certain people and helps others. There is definitely room for improvement when it comes to taxing but I believe that there will always be a fair, middle ground, and unfair side depending on where you fall into, just like it is depicted in the video.

Although I liked some of the ideas that president Coolidge said I do think that it is important to have a good amount of taxes go to public service. I like to know that some of my money does go to the certain services like fixes roads, building bridges, etc. I really enjoyed the end of his speech when he says "One of the greatest favors that can be bestowed upon the American people is economy in government." (Video, 4:50) Although consumers and producers are the main contributors to the economy he is saying that the government has a powerful affect on it and should contribute as well.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Real Costs of Government?

by Kevin Smolek - Monday, April 24, 2017, 10:35 PM

I'm actually surprised by the numbers that have been provided for this topic about taxation. We hear so much about the "1%" and the "99%", but looking at the charts, the top 20th percentile is paying nearly 75% of taxes collected. That includes everyone making 135k or more. It looks to me like the wealthy are paying the lions share of taxes, and yet I hear all the time that they aren't paying their "fair share". You can also see from the graphs that income tax only accounts for about half of collected tax revenue. President Coolidge in the linked speech said "Taxes take from everyone a part of his earnings and force everyone to work for a certain part of his time for the government." He's absolutely right, in that a percentage of your labor goes to the government. What this means, is that when the government wastes money, what it's actually doing is squandering the efforts of its citizens. He finishes his speech with these words "One of the greatest favors that can be bestowed upon the American people is economy in government." The mindset that President Coolidge showed in this speech is strikingly different from the actions of our current day Presidents, where deficit spending is the norm. In 2011, our government spent more than \$3 for every \$2 it took in.

<https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/attachments/budgetinfographic.pdf>

Why has the costs of running the government gone up so much in the last 8 years? We added 8 trillion dollars to the national debt under Obama. <https://www.thebalance.com/us-debt-by-president-by-dollar-and-percent-3306296>. That seems unnecessary, and I think Coolidge would agree.

Sum of ratings:3 (1) 3

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Inequality in Taxes

by Julie Lindholm-Couch - Monday, April 24, 2017, 10:59 PM

I think the Three Brothers example from the video posted by PragerU on YouTube provides an excellent source of understanding on how our tax system really works. At first glance, it sounds the fairest to tax the rich people more than the middle and lower classes. This system sounds wonderful to those in the lower classes, but not so great for those in the upper class. While the upper class folks do have and make more money than most, it is not fair to tax them considerably more money than everyone else. It is not right to penalize those who are successful for being successful. The IRS federal Income tax does have logic for their tax rate differences, but it is not necessarily the right thing to do. It seems to be a very grey area in our society because no one wants to pay taxes to begin with, let alone be asked to pay more. I think this video has actually greatly influenced my opinion on our tax codes. On my end, it sounds great for the rich to have to pay a higher amount of taxes than I do. Until watching this video, I have never preconsidered what it would be like to have to pay 70% of my income in taxes. I think it's preposterous to charge someone that much money simply because they are successful and manage their money well. We live by a very broken system.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

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Re: Inequality in Taxes

by Kevin Smolek - Thursday, April 27, 2017, 2:58 PM

I agree that it sure seems like the system is broken, and that taxing the hell out of successful people reduces the incentives for working hard to become wealthy. I found an interesting article on marketwatch, that says: "The top 1% of taxpayers pay a higher effective

income-tax rate than any other group (around 23%, according to a report released by the Tax Policy Center in 2014) — nearly seven times higher than those in the bottom 50%”. They also say: “An estimated 45.3% of American households — roughly 77.5 million — will pay no federal individual income tax”.

<http://www.marketwatch.com/story/45-of-americans-pay-no-federal-income-tax-2016-02-24>

This shows how broken the system actually is, with nearly half of the population paying no income tax at all, and the other half picking up the tab.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: Inequality in Taxes

by Jeff Johnson - Friday, April 28, 2017, 10:50 PM

While I agree with u that taxing 70% of someone's income is totally ridiculous. The highest tax rate for 2017 was 39.6% for people who made over 418,000 (<https://taxfoundation.org/2017-tax-brackets/>). In the past during world war 2 it went as high as 94% (http://bradfordtaxinstitute.com/Free_Resources/Federal-Income-Tax-Rates.aspx). While I start to feel sorry for the people making right around half a million dollars they would still take home a little over 300,000. The one thing that hasn't been discussed is the tax loopholes for the wealthiest. I found some interesting information wonder if this changes your opinion at all (<https://americansfortaxfairness.org/tax-fairness-briefing-booklet/fact-sheet-taxing-wealthy-americans/>).

Overview

The federal income tax is designed to be progressive — tax rates increase in steps as income rises. For decades this helped restrain disparities in income and helped provide revenue to make public services available to all Americans. Today the system has badly eroded — many multi-millionaires and billionaires pay a lower tax rate than average American families.

Ironically, this has happened while the gap between the wealthy and everyone else has grown wider than ever. The extremely rich aren't only earning and owning more — many are also passing wealth to their heirs tax free, creating a new American aristocracy with vast fortunes.

How the rich avoid paying taxes — and what to do about it

- **Tax income from investments like income from work.** Billionaires like Warren Buffett pay a lower tax rate than millions of Americans because federal taxes on investment income (*unearned income*) are lower than the taxes many Americans pay on salary and wage income (*earned income*). Because Buffett gets a high percentage of his total income from investments, he pays a lower income tax rate than his secretary. Currently, the top *statutory* tax rate on investment income is just 23.8%, but it's 43.4% on income from work. To reduce this inequity, *we should raise tax rates on capital gains and dividends* so they match the tax rates on salaries and wages. These loopholes lose \$1.3 trillion over 10 years.
- **Cap tax deductions at 28% for the wealthiest Americans.** The rich are able to get much bigger tax breaks for the same tax deductions taken by the middle class. For example, a wealthy family living in a McMansion gets a much bigger tax deduction on the interest on their large mortgage than a middle-class family gets on the interest on their small mortgage on a two-bedroom house. *President Obama* has proposed to *limit the tax break on deductions that the richest 3% can take to 28 cents on the dollar*. In other words, the rich would get the same tax benefit per dollar of deductions as a household in the 28% tax bracket, but not more (as they do now) at the higher 39.6% bracket. This would raise \$500 billion over 10 years.
- **Strengthen the estate tax.** Some of the ultra-rich are able to take advantage of loopholes so they pay almost nothing in inheritance taxes. Others take advantage of the fact that the exemption levels for the estate tax are very high — \$5.3 million per individual (\$10.6 million per couple). *President Obama proposes to restore the exemptions to their 2009 levels* — \$3.5 million for an individual (\$7 million for a couple) taxed at a 45% top rate. This and other reforms would raise \$131 billion over 10 years. Only three estates for every 1,000 deaths would be affected.
- **Another way to ensure that large inheritances are taxed is to close the income tax loophole that lets wealthy people avoid capital gains taxes by holding their assets until they die.** Their heirs then escape paying taxes on these gains. This would raise about \$650 billion over 10 years. We should also end specialized trusts that allow families, such as the Waltons who own more than half of Walmart, to completely avoid paying estate and gift taxes.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Inequality in Taxes

by Branden Long - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 7:01 PM

I agree that the system is vary unfair to the people that are in the higher tax bracket if you think about it just because you make more money doesn't really mean that you're more wealth. If you take a person who is on the edge of becoming high class and middle class in our system a person would stay in the middle class due to the fact that they don't want to pay 70% of the tax, yet when you think about it the person that is low high tax bracket he actually loses more money do to the tax system.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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Re: Inequality in Taxes

by Nadav Klappholz - Compton - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 8:46 PM

I think we should probably define words like "success" and terms like "good at managing money" before we use them in a broad sense.

I don't like big government and I believe taxation is coercive, but do you really believe we live in a meritocracy, where "success" is determined by our ability to work hard and save money? And where does money come from, exactly? Not from thin air, surely. The brokenness of our system has very little to do with taxes and very much to do with the *hows* and the *whys* at the root of an income disparity so monumentally great that the top 1% of people own more wealth than the bottom 90. I don't think it's possible for a person to work billions of times as hard as another, or to be billions of times better or more deserving. It's important to keep in mind that wealth doesn't just "exist". It is extracted from an "economy" that is made up of *people*, living, breathing, working *people*. If by luck or skill or cunning I manage to manipulate the system and extract billions of dollars of profit from the labor of other people, is it then *mine*? Can I really claim *ownership* of all that wealth? Am I really just that much better than everybody else? And if I'm a moral person, doesn't there exist any sort of obligation to redistribute some of "my" wealth to the people who generated it for me? Or maybe it's just mine, mine because I "worked harder" and because I'm "successful by my own merits" and I should enjoy my life, unmindful of anything or anyone but myself?

(In an ideal world, rich people would "redistribute" their wealth voluntarily because they believed that helping disadvantaged and suffering people was more important than owning a private jet or drinking \$100,000 dollar wine--but I'm a hypocrite in my own right--I am incredibly privileged in my own way, and enjoy lots of stuff that's far from necessary for my survival)

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Inequality in Taxes

by Kevin Smolek - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 10:43 PM

What's the alternative? You say: "In an ideal world, rich people would "redistribute" their wealth voluntarily because they believed that helping disadvantaged and suffering people was more important than owning a private jet or drinking \$100,000 dollar wine"... This is never going to happen. So what is the alternative? As Joe said in class, even if we taxed the top 1% at 100% of their income, it would only reduce our national debt 3%. So does the government take over businesses? Run them for the good of the people? Take the farm land away for those rich greedy multinational conglomerates and give it to the people? It's not the federal governments job to make sure life is "fair". Socialism doesn't work, as has been proven time and time again throughout history. If the rich get taxed too much, they move, and we loose all tax revenue that they would have provided. Just like the example given in class from our own state. And when the means of production are given to "the people", those same people end up killing each other and starving to death when the business fail and the corporations pull out.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Coolidge on Taxation

by Amelia Salzman - Monday, April 24, 2017, 11:52 PM

The Coolidge video:

It is always interesting to see different opinion on taxation. It seems that the politicians and U.S. citizens have always had mixed feelings and a rocky relationship with taxes. I tend to watch speeches by political leaders with caution. More often than not they are only presenting one said of the argument. Even if I agree with that side I still find it irritating. Coolidge seemed attempt to sound balanced on the issue of taxes. When he talked about farmers and workers being “doomed” to pay taxes it seemed very dramatic way of presenting the information. (I think a bit over the top) but it seems to acknowledge how many people felt at the time and still do. The part that stood out to me the most was when he discussed the concept that taxes as time Americans were forced to work for the government. That is an interesting way of describing taxes. I’ve never heard that before. Although he dose mention the benefits like the raise in standard of living from taxes the whole speech seems to give a negative feel to taxes. I can’t decide if that was what he felt or intended. Maybe it’s just the way I viewed it based a life time of people complaining about taxes

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Coolidge on Taxation

by Jessica Fialho - Friday, April 28, 2017, 9:41 PM

I admit President Coolidge has some compelling points in his speech. He starts off by saying, “This country needs every ounce of its energy to restore itself.” (Coolidge, 1 second). On top of a strong opening statement he also makes a point to state, that “...taxes must be paid” (Coolidge, 3:00 min). To me he makes at least a few good points because taxes are what help contribute to expenses that should be helping the people. However, Amelia I do agree with you that, “Coolidge seemed attempt to sound balanced on the issue of taxes.” I found this quite interesting and not something i expected from a political leader.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Coolidge on Taxation

by Amelia Salzman - Friday, April 28, 2017, 10:55 PM

I agree with you. I think his opening of "this country needs every ounce of its energy...." is intresting way to start a talk about taxes. It seems today we only hear the arguments of lowering and raising taxes. We rarely hold the disscuion why or why not. Coolidge seems to be trying to make taxes seem like a Noble thing to do. He suggest that that americans can be the ones to save or "restore" America by smiply paying taxes. It is a clever way of raising support for something that averge Americans seem to see as generally negative.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Taxes Overtime

by Bailey Koffler - Monday, April 24, 2017, 11:54 PM

According to the chart, Income Tax Revenue made up nearly all of the Tax Revenue (U.S. Tax Revenue from 1980-2009). The gap between income tax and total revenue was about four times the amount in 2009 than it was in 1980.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Taxation is a moral issue, Calvin Coolidge's ideas are still relevant today

by Nadav Klappholz - Compton - Tuesday, April 25, 2017, 12:01 AM

Pres. Coolidge has always struck me as an interesting guy, and his story is an interesting one. These days, I think, he's sadly--maybe tragically--understood, and he gets a lot of blame for the Great Depression, blame which I think is disproportionate and largely misplaced. His moral position on taxation--that aggressive taxation is repressive and basically a form of tyranny--I tend to agree strongly with. Freedom and economic prosperity are so intertwined as to be inseparable--you really can't have one without the other in this country, for better or worse, and appropriating people's money in order to spend it (often waste it) on stuff like, say, a forty-million dollar bomb is a sort of theft, as far as I'm concerned, and an injustice, and an infringement on liberty. If the average American--if hardly *any* Americans--had any idea what their tax dollars were being used for and had some influence over that use, and wanted to vote for a higher tax for whatever reason, for infrastructure or universal healthcare or free college--then fine. But that isn't the situation we're in. The matter--the crisis--of our insane debt is another issue altogether, but when poor Americans' tax dollars essentially insure Wall Street greed, something is very wrong.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Taxation is a moral issue, Calvin Coolidge's ideas are still relevant today

by Kevin Smolek - Friday, April 28, 2017, 6:38 PM

Coolidge definitely had a unique vision of the responsibility of the US government, a view that is sorely lacking in this time. Clearly responsible spending is not a priority, and even if it was, getting two people to agree on what that means appears to be impossible now. There's things that need to be purchased, for instance your example of a \$40 million dollar bomb. A weapon costing that much would most likely be a strategic nuclear weapon, and is a critical component of our MAD (mutually assured destruction) strategy. I would classify it as a needed expense, since protection of the country is a primary job of the federal government. Taxes are needed, but it's the governments responsibility to use the money they take in an efficient manner, and that is not what's being done at this time.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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We don't need more Nuclear weapons, Taxation is coercive (but I still pay my taxes because I don't want to go to jail)

by Nadav Klappholz - Compton - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 7:56 PM

Well, we can certainly talk about MAD, if you like. Most estimates put our nuclear stockpile at 6,800--I looked around and multiple legit-seeming sources cited this number exactly--with 1800 maintained for immediate use. Most of these weapons are, apparently, exponentially? more powerful than the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With the exception of Russia, which has got 7,000ish warheads, apparently, that's many times more nukes than the rest of the world has, combined. Now, the only justifiable reason to have nukes is for deterrence--MAD, as the game theorists call it--

and there's a large debate over the legitimacy, morality, and wisdom of that path (which happens to be the one we're on, and very firmly, as evinced by our 6,800 nukes). Pragmatists might say that in an ideal world, there wouldn't be *any* nukes, but we've got to face facts and be prepared for the worst. I have a difficult time with that argument, just as the idea of senselessly destroying half the world in an insane MAD-justified vengeance-genocide makes me uncomfortable. More than uncomfortable, actually--it's bullshit, *insanity*. Just like the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of innocent people in Hiroshima and in Nagasaki was insanity (Yes, I'm well aware of all the hypothesizing about "potential loss of life if we were forced to invade" and other such bullshit. Let me say again: *hundreds of thousands of innocent people were killed, by us, at best because we THOUGHT things MIGHT be worse if we didn't.*)

But that's not really what we're talking about. I'm a citizen of the US, I pay taxes, and I don't think we need any more nuclear weapons--I'm not convinced we need to or should have *any*, actually--but because I like it here and want to stay (and don't want to go to jail) I begrudgingly pay my taxes, which in turn are spent on lots of things I don't agree with. What if I were a pacifist, for instance, and my tax dollars were funding things like... war, and the military occupation of I-don't-know-how-many-countries? Fundamentalist Christians see it as a violation of their rights to be forced to fund birth control--and especially abortions. So, how is a pacifist being forced to fund a war any different from that, really? You can conscientiously object to most things in this country, but objecting in a way that *really* counts--voting with your wallet, as the saying goes, and withholding tax dollars from a government that's doing things you don't agree with--can land you in jail, and certainly puts many restrictions on your economic freedom, if nothing else. And if we forget about the govt. using our tax dollars for things we don't agree with for a second, I think most people would agree that outright *wasting* tax dollars is a shitty thing to do--

like <https://cybercemetery.unt.edu/archive/cwc/20110929213815/http://www.wartimecor> this, for instance--and we only found out about these \$30+ billion wasted dollars because we set up a commission to investigate... I think it's safe to say that the government wastes tax dollars on a *very* regular basis (whether or not it's an "unavoidable margin of error" is another question that I can't answer, and the people who say the level of waste might be as high as 50% are probably just a *little* off, there) but it's certainly not an ideal system. And as Prof. Escobar pointed out in class, there's nothing in the Constitution about taxes. That is, nothing saying we have to pay them, and nothing saying we *shouldn't* have to pay them. What I do know is that big government makes me uncomfortable, and paying taxes that will be used for crap that I find to be morally and ethically repugnant makes me feel like shit, when I'm forced to think about it--but again, I still do it, because the alternative is worse and I'm not brave or principled enough to want to go to jail in defense of my beliefs. But wait--isn't that coercion, then? Surely there's something in the good ol' Constitution about that.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: We don't need more Nuclear weapons, Taxation is coercive (but I still pay my taxes because I don't want to go to jail)

by Kevin Smolek - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 10:23 PM

Of course in an ideal world there would be no nukes, just like in an ideal world we wouldn't have madmen with doomsday weapons. I was merely trying to say that in terms of government spending, big bombs are at least constitutionally under the federal governments purview.

You say "Fundamentalist Christians see it as a violation of their rights to be forced to fund birth control--and especially abortions. So, how is a pacifist being forced to fund a war any different from that, really?"

I would argue that nowhere in the Constitution does it say the federal government has a right to override states rights on the matter. However it does lay out the responsibility of the federal government when it comes to protection of the country and waging war. Armies cost money, and even pacifists gain a benefit from the protection they provide. Now of course I'm not saying that taxpayer money shouldn't be spent on birth control, just that tax money going to a military is constitutionally sound.

The waste that goes on in government is staggering I'm sure, and is a betrayal of the public's trust. I don't know if increasing the size of government causes waste, or if waste causes an increase in size. Corruption seems like a constant problem, we see it all over the world, in places like Venezuela, where socialism has totally fallen apart, and the most resource rich country in south America is collapsing with people starving to death. I'm sure it's rampant in our own government, it just gets hidden better.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Responses too three brothers

by Jeff Johnson - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 2:04 PM

From the responses to this story it seems that a lot of students who watched it seem to think the progressive tax system was unfair. Being a student I don't make very much money and figured most students would be in that lowest tax bracket with me. Does anyone who responded that way actually want to pay more in taxes? In a perfect world the three brother's argument might makes sense but do we all have the exact same IQ same job and same pay. I don't feel like in Eugene I could choose to work 20 hours a week and be able to buy a house and have two kids and a wife that didn't work. The people who are in the top tax bracket aren't making the same wage as the people on the bottom and just working more hours. I went online and found the website <https://www.prageru.com/> that made this video. I then went to the about and under frequently asked questions if u scroll down u get this. I was wondering if this change's anyone's mind?

Does PragerU have an ideology?

Every person and every organization has a value system and a set of beliefs. PragerU is no different. We believe in the principles that have made America great. We believe in economic and religious freedom, a strong military that protects our allies and the religious values that inform Western civilization, also known as Judeo-Christian values.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Responses too three brothers

by Nadav Klappholz - Compton - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 8:14 PM

Looking at the PRAGERU website (glancing at a few of the pages, really) it looks like those peeps are fundamentalist christians--"IF THERE IS NO GOD, MURDER IS NOT WRONG" was the big headline on the page I landed on when I clicked the "religion/philosophy" link--and they're also staunch conservatives (the two tend to go together, and the result is often a goldmine of hypocrisy--"yay small government" but also "lets criminalize abortion and force science teachers to teach creationism") but uh.. as a staunch neo-Marxist (which is a shitty description because as a term, Marxism isn't really definable, and anyway my views are too nuanced to be summed up in two words, just like--surprise--those of a great many democrats and republicans) my belief is that absurdly rich people are rich because, knowingly or unknowingly, they exploit the labor of a whole bunch of other not-so-rich people (or, if you'd like a very modern example, our Technocrat overlords who farm our attention and our data for profit) and that that's the root of our problem(s). Basically, capitalism sucks. And to be clear, criticizing capitalism doesn't mean I hate America--there's nothing about capitalism in our constitution, which lays out a beautiful and peerless foundational ideology that has very much to do with freedom and very little to say about economics (which isn't at all obvious most of the time). Whether taxing the rich is the "solution" is another question (I would say it isn't).

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Coolidge vs Trump

by Jeff Johnson - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 3:01 PM

I found the article "White House unveils dramatic plan to overhaul tax code in major test for Trump" at Washingtonpost.com. One thing that surprised me is Trump is planning to still have a progressive tax code.

"It would eliminate the seven existing income tax brackets and replace them with three brackets, containing new rates of 10 percent, 25 percent and 35 percent, based on someone's income. White House officials haven't specified which income levels would hit the higher tax brackets, as they see that as part of ongoing discussions with Capitol Hill."

Trump does sound a lot like Coolidge in the fact that he believes that lowering taxes is a good thing for the American people. The huge difference is Coolidge talks about making the government run more efficiently so it doesn't need to take your hard earned wealth. Trump on the other hand proposes no ways to actually pay for the budget gap except with some idea of maybe tariffs.

“A key part of Trump’s tax plan during the campaign was to levy a tax or tariff against companies that move overseas and then try to sell their products back to U.S. consumers. Cohn and Mnuchin said they were still looking at alternatives on how to structure this idea, and it was not an element of the plan rolled out Wednesday. They said they found a plan embraced by House Republican leaders to be unworkable in its current form, but they are going to work with key lawmakers to see if adjustments can be made, Mnuchin said.”

That GOP plan, led by Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.), that would have offset broad reduction in rates with a change in the way imports and exports are taxed, a proposal known as a “border adjustment tax.”

I also believe Coolidge would have had a huge problem with debt and put in place some plan that would eliminate it by making the government more efficient rather than going into more debt just to lower taxes.

“White House officials are ambitious, but the path to overhauling the tax code is riddled with political land mines. Many budget experts say they believe the White House’s plan would reduce federal revenue by so much that it would grow the debt by trillions of dollars in the next decade, growing interest costs and slowing the economy.”

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2



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The Debt is Big, Scary, Suck-ish, and NOBODY knows how to fix it (or at least, nobody knows how to fix it AND how to get enough people to agree with them on how to fix it to ACTUALLY fix it)

by Nadav Klappholz - Compton - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 8:26 PM

The debt is tough. It's going to be hard to fix because people don't want to give up nice things they have, and don't want to give up any more of their money. But our debt has now *exceeded* our GDP--that is, we owe more "money" than our *entire* economy produces in a year. I put quotes around "money" because when we're talking about trillions of dollars, our understanding (or mine at least) of what "money" is, and means, starts not to work so well. But anyhow, it seems like the solution to fixing our debt--like any debt--should be fairly simple. Pay more towards the debt (raise taxes) and cut spending. Except in our highly polarized (politically at least) society, we can't really agree on anything. We can't decide on how to cut costs (Republicans tend to want *more* spending on the military, for example, and Democrats like "entitlements") and nobody likes paying higher taxes--raising

taxes on the rich would barely make a dent in the short term, and raising taxes on anyone *but* the rich is a political non-starter. So in short, as far as I'm able to understand it, no one's got an f'ing clue how we're going to get out of this mess. Which sucks for a lot of reasons, but especially because, as it is often pointed out, the people who got us *into* the mess are going to be dead before the real repercussions are felt, and *certainly* before the cleanup is anywhere *near* finished.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Even more unsure of what's fair

by Jessica Fialho - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 10:32 PM

Does the Example of the Three Brothers, which provides an explanation of the progressive tax code currently in use, help, hurt, or otherwise influence your understanding of taxation in the United States?

I admit, taxes and my understanding of them are very limited coming into this. I understood that there are brackets and that taxes help cover the costs of various things. (Such as road construction and military and more.) The example of the Three Brothers video had me definitely debating even more what is considered fair now. It helped me understand a bit more of the different opinions out there though. With the three brothers arguing over what is fair it has me wondering the same thing.

Going into this I thought taxes were fairly reasonable for the most part. It is difficult to please everyone and no one likes paying taxes, but at least there is a system that seemed to be working. Although, I didn't know too much. I believed the more you make the more you got taxed. So I understood the general concept of it. However, now after watching this video I am now not at all sure where I stand. So where it helped me understand different methods of how taxes could be done and the different ways people are mentioning. I do not know what I consider to be fair at all now. Hopefully this discussion will help me settle myself more and understand taxes better.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Lowering taxes a dream

by Jessica Fialho - Friday, April 28, 2017, 9:54 PM

What conclusions can you draw by examining the history of taxation in the United States provided in these charts and graphs?

The graphs reveal that 1945 was one of the highest taxation ratings. I can tell you I'm thankful we are not getting taxed that high now and it has since decreased drastically. Although it would be nice to go back to 1915 taxation rate when it was at its lowest, but I know that would not at all support our government spending so it would not be beneficial to the market to lower taxes that low. It is only a dream to have such a low tax rate.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

0

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**More on Unfair verses Fair**

by Jessica Fialho - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 12:40 PM

I think several of us bring up various excellent points about taxes and how what needs to be addressed is where the money is actually going to. We can tell it's going to defense and building up the military and various maintenance and other things such as health care, but as Jeff Johnson pointed out in his example, the government would probably be the ones giving the brothers the bill and then too often coming back and saying that there was a mis calculation and we actually need to be paying more. There should be less of this and a more consistent line for what is expected for the people to pay.

However, even after all our conversations and sources and the three brother's video, I have concluded I am even more confused in the end about Taxes and what I deem fair. On one hand I completely agree with what President Coolidge mentioned in his speech where he stated, "I want the people of America to be able to work less for the government -- and more for themselves." This would be ideal where people are benefiting themselves and our government is in a more stable position where we are able to benefit ourselves individually easier. In a way I believe we are already seeing this more in this century with our higher technology and the younger generations carrying around cell phones...although I don't necessarily agree with a 5 year old having a smart phone. (That's a different topic though.) However, at the same time the unemployment rate is still extremely low in many states for various reasons which means that these people are not contributing to Taxes and then they are not supporting the government to help pay expenses at all for whatever reasons there may be.

So, do the people who work 60 hours deserve to be taxed incredibly high like the brother who made more in the three brothers video? I do believe this needs to be adjusted. I don't have an answer or any suggestions to how to make this more fair and I wish I did, but there should be a way out there to find a more balanced way. The video definitely helped put in perspective some of the unfairness in our current Tax routine.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Inflation of Taxes During War**

by Michaella Ensele - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 12:53 PM

The conclusions I get from the graphs about the history of taxation in the United States was that the one percent have paid most of the taxes throughout history. Before reading this material I had little knowledge about how the tax system worked, it seems to be fair on paper but when I look at the numbers these graphs show it opens up my mind. In the graph showing the total percentage of each tax bracket I was shocked that the one percent have to pay almost 30% in taxes. I think it's easy for people like me and many of you I would assume to say well they have a bunch of money so they should have to pay more. If one of us won the lottery we would now be part of that one percent or close to it and would have to pay that 30% in taxes, doesn't sound that awesome to me. Another conclusion I got from the graphs and Joe also said this in his lecture, that taxes skyrocket when the United States enters a war.

During WWI they passed a new income tax that went as high as 67% comparing that to the 2010 chart where the highest income tax was 20%. They increased the tax so much in order to finance the war.

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Final thoughts on taxation

by Jeff Johnson - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 1:45 PM

As we have talked about taxes in this forum it has mostly been about income tax but I don't think we can forget all the other taxes we have to pay. I found an interesting article "A List Of 97 Taxes Americans Pay Every Year (<http://theeconomiccollapseblog.com/archives/a-list-of-97-taxes-americans-pay-every-year>). I also saw a few people mention they didn't mind paying for roads when talking about income tax but we already have a separate gas tax for that. The biggest hidden tax that a few people started to mention is our debt. I believe this is exactly what Coolidge is talking about when he says "economy in government". What he is saying is that the government needs responsibility for its part in the economy. The federal government expects to bring in 3.64 trillion dollars in 2017 (<http://www.usgovernmentrevenue.com/total>) and still we project an increase in our debt. Now we start to break this down and we find a few troubling things. Not only will we have to pay whatever taxes are thrown out at us in our lifetime but somewhere along the line we also have an almost 20 trillion dollar debt that averages out to over 60,000 per person in the US and keeps climbing.

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My Take on The Three Brothers

by Bailey Koffler - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 9:26 PM

It wasn't until this year that I first began learning about the government and how it works (I was exempt from government in High School). Even though this is my second term taking history and I took political science last term I still am not very knowledgeable when it comes to these topics. With that being said, I found the Three Brothers video very helpful. The video truly simplified the way the progressive income tax works and how people from different income levels may perceive it. Because income tax affects people differently there is much debate on the issue and people can only speak from their perspective and the benefits they receive. As I have only experienced the income tax from one perspective I've never been able to fully understand what the issue is. After watching the video and seeing why Harry was so upset about the agreed upon plan I was able to grasp the ideas more easily. When Tom made his proposal on what each brother should pay I did not think it was very fair. It would be the same situation if the brothers had gone to lunch and divided the bill depending on their income. I could never imagine someone doing this, if I divide the bill with my siblings at lunch we would each pay for what we received.

After watching the Three Brothers video I found another video from Prager University (linked below) explaining whether or not the rich pay their fair share of income taxes. Professor Ohanian explains how fair would be the group of people earning 10% of the U.S. income would pay 10% of the U.S. taxes, and so on. He then explained that the top 10% earners pay 71% of all income tax, yet only earn 43% of all income (PRAGERU- Fair Share Video). He then explains how "the rich" pay more than their fair share. This video helped further explained Harry's frustration in the Three Brothers video and helped me gain an even larger understanding of income taxes.

Prager University "Do the Rich Pay Their Fair Share?": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnEe4oaSC88>

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Coolidge: Basic Human Needs and Taxes

by Bailey Koffler - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 9:58 PM

I found President Coolidge's position on taxation compelling and very unique. Coolidge's stance sounded as if he truly wanted what was best for the people. This was expressed in his use of terms like "doomed" (par 2 of text transcription), "taxes take... and force..." (par 4 of text transcription) and "we are bound to suffer a very severe and distinct curtailment of our liberty" (par 9 of text transcription). One of my favorite points that Coolidge expressed was explaining how necessities like food, clothing and shelter are put off until people pay their taxes because they must be paid.

"It is only out of what is left, after they are paid, that the necessities of food, clothing, and shelter can be provided and the comforts of home secured, or the yearnings of the soul -- for a broader and more abundant life gratified." (par 11 of text transcription).

It's interesting to me that the President would mention how giving the government money is considered more important than basic human needs. As expressed in Maslow's hierarchy of needs food and shelter are the base of the pyramid, meaning without these things a human cannot function and will ultimately fail (click the link below for more information on this). I agree

with this point because I do not find taxes more valuable than basic essentials for living. Without food and shelter a person would be unable to go to work, therefore, the money that goes to taxes would not exist. I like how the President seems to actually care about the wellbeing of the people rather than the wellbeing of the government only.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s_hierarchy_of_needs

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Thoughts on the History of Taxes

by Bailey Koffler - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 10:52 PM

When the first permanent income tax was implemented in 1913 the the rate was 1% for the first bracket and 7% for the top bracket (Wiki- Income Tax in the US). Toward the beginning of the first World War the tax rate jumped nearly 60% from the beginning rate for the top bracket and only 1% for the bottom bracket. There are other spikes seen during the Depression Era and even more so in World War II. Tax rates stayed fairly high and consistent from World War II until the Reagan era tax cuts. Tax rates dropped immensely during this time. When Bush implemented tax cuts there was little impact, along with the American Taxpayer Relief Act. During times of War tax rates seem to be significantly higher. This is due to the increased spending on war efforts. Another observation I made from the Income Tax in the United States chart was that the bottom bracket does not have as dramatic increases and decreases as the top bracket. The bottom bracket may experience a change of 5% or so, but for the most part it's by a percent or two in a span of a decade or longer. Whereas, the top bracket has experienced far more significant changes of 15% in a decade or so. The top bracket is affected greater than the lower bracket during times of high crisis or high spending in our country.

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