

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

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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.

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History of Taxation in the US

by Isaac Anderson - Monday, April 24, 2017, 9:14 PM

Looking at history of tax cuts in the United States, the rich have consistently been taxed more than the poor, with the rich experiencing rates as high as 94% in 1944 during World War 2, and staying in the 70% range until the Reagan era tax cuts in the early eighties (3). Along with the substantial tax cuts beginning in the eighties we can also see the rise of greater wealth inequality (1). "Productivity has surged, but income and wages have stagnated for most Americans. If the median household income had kept pace with the economy since 1970, it would now be nearly \$92,000, not \$50,000."(1) The same thing also happened in the twenties after the postwar tax reductions (2).

1:<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/02/income-inequality-in-america-chart-graph>

2:<https://thinkprogress.org/wealth-inequality-is-now-as-bad-as-it-was-during-the-1920s-7ec5cebcfc3>

3:https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Income_tax_in_the_United_States#History_of_top_rates

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Taxation: Example of Three Brothers

by Katie Fuller - Monday, April 24, 2017, 9:20 PM

This video about the taxation used in the U.S. has made me come to see it in terms of unfair and unjust, for, as in the example with the brothers, Tom does not pay anything for the renovations made while Dick pays a decent portion, and Harry is required to pay for most of it. Before this video, and my inspection of how tax rates have changed, and the results of that, I have thought that taxing the rich to help out the poor was a sensible idea. However, now I see that this is not only unfair to those that earn more due to hard work and investments, but does not split the needed amount to be paid evenly, as Dick had mentioned before Tom's intervention, that seemed to consider the financial standing that each had and required a payment that was more suitable; 12% of the needed amount based upon their wages. Of course, this would be an ideal outcome, but since most people are like Dick, and would prefer to pay less as to benefit more.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Taxation: Example of Three Brothers

by Jordan Selker - Tuesday, April 25, 2017, 12:48 PM

I believe it's important to separate reality and cartoon youtube videos when discussing complex issues such as taxation. The first discrepancy this video has the liberty to take is that everyone being taxed is subject to equal opportunities growing up, this is incredibly, incredibly misleading. As a student in the Corvallis public school system I was blessed with new schools, great teachers, AP programs, college preparatory programs etc.. that many children, but especially those in the inner cities do not have access to. Instead they show up to worn down schools riddled with harassment, bullying, and violence, large classes with underfunded programs, in a scenario where simply graduating is a success. For example, there are six separate districts in NYC alone that boast graduation rates below 41% (See teaching monster citation.). Schools are just one piece of someone's opportunities growing up. Many of these children are lucky to have one sober parent that can work all day to put food on the table and clothes on their back, leaving no one at home to raise the children, more developmental issues arise, that could lead to amongst other things, criminal charges that restrict future jobs or education opportunities. I urge you to examine how most of these communities of immigrants and minorities were treated through our history, and continue to be treated today, and how they've found themselves trying to fight upstream in order to make an honest living. Mind you it's been barely more than 60 years since we've integrated schools, and the discrepancies between policy and implementation, as discussed with various issues in class.

But let's put all of that aside and assume we all receive equal opportunities to receive education and subsequently find jobs. Let's look just at the money and how it operates in society. The S&P 500 has averaged an annual 9.53% return since 1928 (see stern citation). Meaning if your family were to have a million dollars sitting across the stock market, they would make, on average, they would yield over 90,000\$ a year just from this money sitting there doing nothing. This directly clashes with the assumption in the video that these higher earnings at the top of the tax bracket were necessarily achieved by "Harder work". These wealthy families, where wealth is passed down from generation to generation, along with good education, internships, social status and connections, all give the next generation a great opportunity to continue the cycle of wealth, put money in the bank, have that money make money, etc.. Now let's go back to that single mother trying to raise a kid, her family never had money, so she had to work for every penny in her bank. She needed a job, and a car to get to that job, so she makes payments, where she PAYS interest in order to have transportation for work. In essence, because she doesn't have a strong base of capital, she loses money on an annual basis trying to survive. I also invite you to spend a day in a commercial kitchen, on a farm, or any other low income job and try to equate it as "Not working hard" in comparison to those bankers on wall street breaking their backs investing daddy's money.

Our society does not operate anything like this video describes, and it is through our history that our society is formed. We learn everyday about unfair policies, greedy politicians and businessmen, racism and other strains of nationalism that have formed the imperfect world we live in. It is important to see the modern impacts of this history, and let it broaden our perspective on current issues, especially those of equality. I understand that much of this response was not directly related to taxes or a specific prompt, and it's a whole lot of reading for poor Joe to read, and I might get a zero on this response for going to off topic, but when we look at issues of taxation equality, we must take into account the bigger picture. I hope you're able to understand numerical inequalities in taxation could still be "Fair" and how the rich may have some duty to help out those lazy poor people, and separate the class disparity in the US beyond Tom, Dick and Harry, and the "Lazy Carpenter" analogy.

(<http://teaching.monster.com/education/articles/4457-the-best-and-worst-us-districts-for-graduation-rates?page=2>)

(http://pages.stern.nyu.edu/~adamodar/New_Home_Page/datafile/histretSP.html)

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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President Coolidge's position on Taxation

by Katie Fuller - Monday, April 24, 2017, 9:43 PM

I would agree with Coolidge's claim about a need to cut down the public expense in the case he makes about "700 million dollars..needed by the national government...represents all the pay of five million wage earners receiving five dollars a day, working 300 days a year. If the government should add 100 million dollars, it would represent four more days work of these wage owners" (1:42). This is compelling as it makes a claim that if the amount taxed on the rich were waged, it would be unfair to them, as they would need to work more to pay more, in this case. Also the statement of "Taxes take from everyone a part of his earnings and force everyone to work for.. part of his time for the government" (1:10). Though taxes may be nonexistent for those at the lower side of the income spectrum, I agree that ideally, at least, that the lower, middle and top class would all pay their percent toward the government.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Government Services

by William Mc Mahon - Friday, April 28, 2017, 10:22 PM

There is another way in which everyone paying the same tax rate is still unfair.

Even if we pay the same percentage of tax, there is no difference in our amount of access to government services. This means the upper class will still be paying more for the same as everyone else.

The Three Brothers video used the metaphor of the improvement of their neighborhood to illustrate this. (Video 1:20)

Ironically, most wealthy people are probably using the least amount of government services. They can afford to send their children to private school. They're not going to be taking advantage of any social welfare programs. The most egalitarian service they benefit from is military spending, being just as protected as any other citizen of the country.

It's a difficult issue. I do believe the government is bloated. I'd like to think that there is a lot of streamlining that could be done to save everyone money. I'm not sure if there is really a "fair" way to tax. With such a sharp income disparity it seems unlikely.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Solving the Taxation Connection?

by Brogan Smith - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 11:57 AM

I hadn't thought of the flat tax system being unfair in that way before: "...This means the upper class will still be paying more for the same as everyone else." This is how many of the social democracies in Europe work. It seems to benefit most everyone because their government spends their money more responsibly. "But the progressive system we (USA) have built raises comparatively very little money to pay for social programs and to reduce economic inequality. And it does so at a high cost in terms of economic efficiency." (NYT)

If there was anyway to connect the money that specific taxpayers are paying to the services they use most, I assume that would be the fairest way to tax. It seems extremely difficult however, especially because many people will claim that they don't use any of the services the government provides, or maybe claim to not need them.

It's probable that the rich don't need government services as much as the rest of us but they pay for other egalitarian services like food safety, and public health services and disease control. And "money going toward international initiatives makes up about 1.7 percent of total income tax revenue. About half of that amount is spent on humanitarian and economic-development assistance, while the remainder is split among the costs of maintaining embassies and diplomatic missions" (Finance AOL). If you're like me, a moderate internationalist, then this is also pleasing. Not *only* to me but potentially to the rich people who want to do business overseas?

Citation:

-Finance AOL- <https://www.aol.com/article/2013/04/25/biggest-things-your-income-taxes-pay-for/20548396/>

NYT- <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/19/business/the-great-american-tax-debate.html>

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Government Services

by John Thompson - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 3:08 PM

Response to William:

Very good point, it seems those who pay the most taxes see the least returned to them since wealthy people don't qualify for welfare or the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). Redistribution of wealth is a mutually held belief for many when it comes to the idea of taxes and relates best to socialism. Socialism, which used to be near the same level of communism, is now becoming more and more accepted by the community especially with the presidential nominee Bernie Sanders. Even though the wealthy do not get back as much as they put in when it comes to taxes, they still receive the benefits of road repairs, military enhancements, police force, and other things that help everybody, not just the poor.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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History of Taxes for the Wealthy

by Jordan Selker - Monday, April 24, 2017, 11:16 PM

Looking at the last graph provided, showing the changing rates for the wealthiest American's taxes, we notices two general trends. First, a quick rise, boosted during war time, of taxes from 7% in 1913 and leveling off around 90% before diving in the 1960's. Unsurprisingly, this is followed with a surge in the income equality in the 1970s continuing to present day. The CBO reports that the top 1%'s income has surged 275% from 1979-2007, while their share of

the total wealth ballooned from 8% to 17% over the same period. So why do we see a top 1% that is paying almost a third of the taxes they did half a century ago, while controlling more than twice the total wealth they did previously? What change in government/society prompted this shift? I would note the entrance of Nixon and Reagan as presidents and the latter's "Trickle Down Economics", an idea of stuffing the pockets of those at the top, letting the overflow "Trickle down" to the lower classes. Almost a hundred years earlier this idea was criticized by William Jennings Bryant during his "Cross of Gold" speech given in 1896.

"There are two ideas of government. There are those who believe that if you just legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, that their prosperity will leak through on those below. The Democratic idea has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous their prosperity will find its way up and through every class that rests upon it."

Students from last term might remember this speech, they also might remember his trifecta of failed presidential campaigns. The power of the wealthy is nothing new to American politics, neither is the anti-radical nativism, and nothing sounds more radical to America than raising taxes.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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The Cyclical Nature of Taxation

by Brogan Smith - Monday, April 24, 2017, 11:18 PM

It appears the Reagan Era Tax Cuts saved the top bracket's money more than anyone else's, lowering their rate from 69.125% to 50% until finally they hit 28% in 1988. Bill Clinton reached, what I believe is a much fairer rate, with the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993: "Previously the top individual tax rate of 31% applied to all income over \$51,900. The Act created a new bracket of 36% for income above \$115,000, and 39.6% for income above \$250,000" (Wiki). I can conclude that there appears to be a cycle. Taxation began low then spiked in WWI and again in WWII and didn't really lower too much until Reaganomics came along. Tax rates tend to increase dramatically during periods of war and especially for the top bracket, although the lowest bracket's rates doubled on a couple occasions. Now it seems that the top bracket is the only one that fluctuates much over the past 20 years.

I appreciate that Calvin Coolidge valued a strong economy as much as he valued national security. It shows his agreeability to both parties and that he cares for the American person. He doesn't want to add 100 million to the government's expenses because he knows it would mean more money coming out of the pocket of the farm hand and the businessman alike (CVD). I could find myself aligning with Coolidge's ideals in the late 1920s, as he wishes to have the people work more for themselves and less for the government. It sounds like he was in favor of decreasing government power (in certain fields). "It is the chief meaning of freedom" (CVD)

Citation:

Calvin Coolidge Video Address (CVD) -

<http://media.lanec.edu/users/escobarj/203/forums/2/coolidge.mp4>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omnibus_Budget_Reconciliation_Act_of_1993

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Unbalanced Taxation and Nation Improvement

by Andrew Erkert - Monday, April 24, 2017, 11:34 PM

During wartimes, I've noticed from the charts, that the tax rates for the top bracket rise exponentially and that the bottom bracket also has a substantial increase. For example, on the Wikipedia chart that listed the past century's tax brackets, the 94% rate for the top bracket was astonishing. However, for the smaller scale more longer term wars such as Iraq and the Gulf war the tax rates did not have the same exponential rise as witnessed during the world wars. I do agree with Coolidge's rationale of taxation, because of the overall benefits and services it provides to its citizens. I do think it's an essential part of maintaining a sustainable public economically and keeping the citizen's wellbeing in good order. The Three Brothers scenario helped my understanding of the Progressive Tax code and emphasized to me how unfair it can feel to the upper income earners. I can certainly see why they may feel that they are unfairly taxed. For example, how they went from 12% for everyone to no pay from the lowest and a small total from the middle and 80% of the fee for the final brother was a big change for them but the majority won out. Two of the three preferred it. It is a great simulation scenario to explain the tax progressions.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Taxation Patterns

by Jaclyn Bahn - Monday, April 24, 2017, 11:43 PM

I see the pattern that taxes were raised in the need for war and the depressions when the money was needed by the government. You can see on the Wikipedia page that taxes increased from 1913 to 1922 for the preparation but mainly recovery of WWI, then decreased until the year of 1932 that increased till 1944 during the depression era and WW2 taxes have since decreased but at a much gradual decline showing that taxes were lowered when there was lesser of a need for the money.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Taxation Video Example with the 3 Brothers

by John Thompson - Tuesday, April 25, 2017, 12:22 AM

Although the video about the three brothers is helpful in explaining the given fictional scenario, I do not believe it explains actual taxation in the United States. The problem with the video was it gave all three of the brothers the same jobs which made little sense since the wealthy were in a completely different line of work. It also portrayed the people who earned less as less hard working when in reality many of the wealthy people in America were born into wealth and on average, worked less hours per week and worked less hard since it was with their minds, not their hands. The idea behind the video was far to one dimensional stating that if you work more hours, you get paid more and this isn't entirely true since different jobs have different wages.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

0

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3 Brothers Video

by Logan Hawkins - Tuesday, April 25, 2017, 1:48 PM

The example of the three brothers, Tom, Dick, and Harry hurts my understanding of taxation in the United States. While watching the video, I felt Dick's plan was the one that made the most sense. They would all be taking the same percentage out of their paycheck for something that would benefit them all. When Tom proposed his plan that allowed him to slide by without paying a cent, I felt it was unjust toward Harry, the hardest working brother. Why should the one who works the hardest pay for the one that works the least? At that point it isn't taxing as much as punishment for working harder and having more money.

However, the reason this hurts my understanding of taxation is the 3 examples used. It's easy to see Tom as a slacker in this video, because he is. But in the real world, the people in Tom's place are not all slackers who choose not to work 40+ hours a week. People with disabilities or teen parents trying to go to school fall into that category. Since they aren't able to work the same jobs or amount of hours of the upper class people can why should they be taxed as much as someone who can?

This video is a good representation of how we are taxed but significantly misses reasons why it is split up the way it is.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: 3 Brothers Video

by Katie Fuller - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 9:40 PM

In regards towards your question at the end about taxation on the lower class, maybe there could be a tax that comes around, after the deduction of your expenses made, which might make the tax more affordable.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

0

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Taxation: Chart analysis

by Katie Fuller - Thursday, April 27, 2017, 6:22 PM

From the chart on Wikipedia, I can conclude that as the years went by, and especially after the times of war, that the government began taxing a large percent from those making a lower amount than previously taxed so much in order to gain more money. This increased rate of percentages is also shown in the chart showing the U.S. federal marginal income tax rate from 1913 to 2010, that shows an increase in the tax rate during the 1920's with the war and after the depression in . The Wikipedia chart also shows how Reagan's tax cuts helped bring down the interest rates that effectively brought down the percentage tax of the rich from 70 to 50%, although, it was brought down to those earning \$85,600 rather than those earning \$200,000 (Income tax in U.S., Wikipedia). However, his tax cut, known as Reaganomics, did come to decline the unemployment rate in 1988 and decline inflate to 4% (Reaganomics,Wikipedia) proving that it did do some good. It also shows how much the Revenue Act increased the income tax rate after World War Two from 81 to 88% on the rich and 10% to 19% on the lowest earners.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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The Three Brothers - Is It Fair?

by William Mc Mahon - Friday, April 28, 2017, 4:41 PM

I was conflicted watching the video about the three brothers explaining the progressive tax code currently in use in the United States.

It's easy to reason that people with more money can afford to pay more taxes, especially when it comes to people who make obscene amounts of money. Take Bill Gates as an example. Is it even possible for him to spend all the money he has? It's easy to think he doesn't need it so he can afford to pay the taxes. However, the video is really saying, "Is that fair."

It's a compelling question, and I would have considered it more closely if it weren't for this judgment call in the video...

When the progressive tax piece enters the picture Harry says, "My wife and I make more money because we work long hours." (Video 2:09) To which Tom says, "Harry, you can work and save all you like, but my wife and I want to enjoy ourselves now, not twenty-five years from now." (Video -2:21)

This is a very broad statement lumping all wealthy people together as being hard working, and all poor people together as being lazy and foolish. I'm sure there are CEO's that work very hard, just like I'm sure there are people living large off dividends from their parent's investments, just like I'm sure there are people without much opportunity working hard at menial labor, and there's people content to skate by and do as little as possible.

I do have to say though, that based off what the video said, the plan itself isn't fair. I can see why that's the current tax policy. It appeals to logic, and the government isn't getting any smaller.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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What Do the American People Think? - Polls

by Brogan Smith - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 11:27 AM

The New York Times article that I selected does a great job of being unbiased and fairly discussing both sides of the taxation spectrum, "progressive tax schedule" <---> "flatter tax schedule". It states that the American government has created a taxation system that falls on the left side, wherein as your income increases the higher portion of taxes you have to pay. But many conservatives wrote to the author of the article stating ""The problem is not with the 5 percent who pay half of all federal income taxes, but with the 50 percent who pay no federal income taxes""(NYT). And that the rich pay more taxes than the social democracies of Europe, as they have a flatter tax rate.

Harvard University Economics Professor, Robert Beren created a table showing how progressive our system really is: "the US system of direct taxes actually reduces inequality more than any other country..." Then follows it up by saying, " but overall, the USA reduces inequality a lot less than most other countries, because the other thing that you need to take into account is what taxes get spent on" (Beren).

Today most Americans realize, in one way or another, that parts of the government are corrupt and they will not use the money coming to them responsibly (at times). About 90 percent of Americans agreed with the steep tax rates in World War II but as of 2012 that number has dropped to 59 percent (NYT). Porter wraps up by surmising that the tax system will always be in shambles according to someone but the best way might be to connect "the taxes people pay to the benefits they finance".

Citation:

-Beren- <http://gregmankiw.blogspot.com/2011/03/what-nation-has-most-progressive-tax.html>

-NYT- <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/19/business/the-great-american-tax-debate.html>

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Coolidge's Position on Taxation Speech

by John Thompson - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 12:48 PM

In regards to President Coolidge's speech, I agree with most all of what he said. I believe that the expenses of government reach everybody and for many, it seems they are working to pay the government more than they are working to pay themselves. He gains merit by his overall stature on government and his belief that "the best government was the government that governed least, and that the welfare of the country hinged not on politicians, but on the people"(1). The part of his speech that I found questionable was his statement that the costs of government are all assessed by the people. Because Coolidge supported power of the people, not government, it made sense that he would support this idea, but that's all it was, an idea. As it stood back then and as it stands today, the people do not necessarily control taxes. An example is what's called a hidden tax. A hidden tax is a tax that is not visible to the taxpayer. These taxes can raise prices of goods and lower salaries for workers. Hidden taxes, although hidden, can decrease the purchasing power of individuals significantly (2). Because of the lack of control people have over certain aspects, I believe it lacks merit to state that the amount of taxation is controlled by the people when to a large degree, it is not.

1: Chapter 24, page 788 of the textbook

2: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hidden_tax

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Taxation News Source That's Against Taxation as it Currently Stands

by John Thompson - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 3:39 PM

I found an interesting article that believed everyone should pay a flat 15% tax. His claims were that treating people who make more money differently than people who make less is the definition of discrimination and should not be tolerated. He states that 1% of the wealthiest

people end up paying for 40% of the nation's tax total and the people paying the most get the least in return. He believes that in order for this flat tax rate to work the government must start spending less than they are earning.

<http://www.financialsamurai.com/were-idiots-please-tell-us-a-flat-tax-is-not-fair/>

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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I disagree with Coolidge

by Jaclyn Bahn - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 7:05 PM

I find myself disagreeing with President Coolidge's ideas on taxation. I look at taxes in a positive manner due to the fact that I feel I am doing my part to help the people around me that need it. I understand and find it compelling of Coolidge when he states, "I want the people of America to be able to work less for the government -- and more for themselves" (paragraph seven of Coolidge speech) but lacks by not having any explanation of how we are supposed accomplish that. He gave us big numbers like, "The yearly expenses of the governments of this country...the stupendous sum of about 7 billion, 500 million dollars -- we get...700 million dollars -- is needed by the national government, and the remainder by local governments" (paragraph five) but did not suggested any solutions to the problem, he only states, "These are some of the reasons why I want to cut down public expense" (Paragraph 6). It could also be argued, where are these cuts going to be made and what are they going to effect?

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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3 Brothers Taxation

by Jaclyn Bahn - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 10:49 PM

The three brothers analogy hurts my understanding of taxes, I feel like there are a lot of examples they use in the video that can not be applied to every tax payer situation. When it comes to the need of money for the government you cannot expect to divide the amount equally at a flat rate like it suggest at 1:54 in the video because families with low incomes may not be able to afford the amount that a family with a higher income can, that's why we go by percentage of income. Plus not all people in the higher tax brackets are working as hard as a lower tax bracket worker like the video suggest at 2:21. I also have a hard time understanding Toms quote at 2:28 "We want to enjoy ourselves now, not ten years from now," when I thought the tax is on income not the money used or saved? I did take away from the video, pie chart, and table that higher take brackets have a higher percentage of taxes which I see as being unfair. If we could take an equal percentage of tax from each bracket and get by I feel that would be best but I do not see where we would be able to make up for that loss or if a lower tax bracket would be able to afford an equal percentage as a higher tax bracket.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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