

HST 203: U.S. History Sp19 (Escobar)

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Taxation
by [Joe Escobar](#) - Friday, April 19, 2019, 11:48 AM

This thread is for discussions on the Taxation topic.

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Tax Rates and Growing Government
by [Zach Edmiston](#) - Saturday, April 20, 2019, 7:20 PM

I found the video of the three brothers to quite an insightful video, and I think that it makes a much clearer visual idea of what taxes are like in the modern day US government, and it draws me in two different directions; one led by strict reason and logic with no consideration for the more ill fortunate, while the other draws from the idea of making sure that those people that didn't come out in life with the best hand of cards are still taken care of and treated fairly. I think that is the root of the issue here, and the ultimate goal that we as a people and our government TRY to strive for, what is considered fair.

I believe that ultimately the growth of the government in the past century is the root problem with this question, as the massive inflation of the government is the cause of needing the massive increases in both the taxes in general, and the massive differential between the different tax brackets. Ultimately if we had the ability to massively shrink the government and its spending, going to more of an isolationist perspective, I believe that we would be able to afford to make massive tax cuts, and come to a conclusion that is much more 'fair' than we currently have. However, not only is this idea worthy of a forum post in itself, it is a very unlikely scenario that we will ever see a massive shrinkage of the US federal government, so let's stick to the brothers.

The brother's conflict came into play from a few factors, one brother working significantly more, spending less, and saving a fair amount as well for the future, whereas the other 2 were less fortunate and tended to spend their money as they received it rather than keeping a savings for themselves; and therefore felt that the more well off brother should handle financial responsibilities. I think that idea in and of itself is a dangerous one, because it

encourages people to be less ambitious, less diligent about their finances and lifestyles, and discourages people from working harder, putting in longer hours, and making themselves financially stable. I feel I may have an interesting perspective on a solution though, and look forward with debating on it; I don't believe that 1 brother should pay 80%, while the other pays 20, and the final 0 while reaping all the benefits, obviously these are simple analogies to the real tax system and I can see why people are unhappy. And while all 3 brothers shouldn't pay 33%, I think the massive differential is where the outrage comes from ultimately. Rather than an 80-20-0 split, I believe that something along the lines of 50-30-20, or even 45-30-25 is much more reasonable and fair. It does still half the richer accountable (A rich person would still lose 50 cents on the dollar to taxes) while still making sure that the less fortunate are helping support the benefits they are receiving, as well as pushing them to strive for more success in life, as pushing yourself harder and harder to lose 80% of a profit, even a larger one, is still a very significant percentage.

I look forward to continuing this debate, as it is no doubt a hot topic!

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Re: Tax Rates and Growing Government

by [Alexander Marx](#) - Wednesday, April 24, 2019, 10:55 PM

Hey Zach, nice post. I think you hit the nail on the head with two main ideas when it comes to taxation: having a system that is the most sensical on paper with no regard to how it may affect an individual, or one that attempts to address the problems of fairness to individual people. I am glad this is a forum topic, as it is such a complex problem being tackled differently by countries all over the world, and I find it hard to see exactly where I stand on the matter. You are absolutely right that a first step would be the shrinking of government, and I also agree that at this point the concept is wishful thinking. What I am trying to wrap my head around is relating the concept of the numbers in the video of the brothers with the broader picture of our entire country's taxation. In the situation of the video, we are looking at a lump sum being paid for and discussing how it should be split. Whether it is 80-20-0 or 50-30-20, we are talking percentages of the \$30,000 and will reach that amount either way. However, if we were to look at it in a way that I think is more applicable to our tax system, we'd be looking at percentages of their individual income. The video stated the brothers make \$150,000, \$75,000, and \$25,000 (including their wives' income). If we were to apply the percentages to this, in the 80-20-0 scenario, \$135,000 would be collected in taxes. If we were to change that split to 50-30-20, only \$99,500 would be collected. If applied to the whole nation, I am not exactly sure how the numbers and ratios of brackets would end up evening out, but I can only imagine that with the top-heavy nature of our economy and the rich holding so much of the fortune that bringing percentages closer to a median in the income tax would result in a significant loss of taxes collected by the government, which most likely wouldn't be acceptable for those in charge with our rampant spending. So in the case of the brothers, I do agree that a more balanced percentage of paying for the betterment of the community is fair, but when talking about the bigger picture of collecting taxes, this balance would have quite different results. I hope I didn't misunderstand your post or misrepresent what you were proposing, though I wanted to make this point either way since it's something the video seemed to leave out. I agree with your your statement on the counterintuitive result of taxing hard work and success so highly, as it can result in people attempting to circumvent taxes with secret funds, or moving somewhere more favorable, as was discussed in class. Thanks for your great post!

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Re: Tax Rates and Growing Government

by [Zach Edmiston](#) - Friday, April 26, 2019, 1:00 AM

Huh, good point Alexander!

I hadn't crunched the numbers in my head as dumb as that sounds, but you're completely right, those less 'top heavy' tax proposals do ultimately result in less collected revenue for the government to spend, and on top of the heated moral debate on the subject, I doubt that less money is ever something that the US government would ever agree to; and I guess that only leaves the options of shrinking the government, or finding a way to collect that needed revenue, and since the government shrinking in 2019 is a total wishful thinking (at best) we have to go with the dreaded scales and tax brackets.

I think a big issue as I mentioned with my conversation with Kaylee that we are beginning to touch on that is important is the moral versus that fair, I think we can all agree that the flat tax, morals not included, is the most fair solution; and as a people we would potentially have the right to push for something such as this, despite our governments protest, (though I doubt they would give up that revenue without a fight) but ultimately, we would have to give up some nice things, or make some major cuts in some areas for that. The moral solution (I guess not to everyone) would be to tax the insanely rich a ridiculous amount of their income, as they likely would still make massive amounts more than the average joe despite that; and we would likely have more money as a country to start chipping away at that deficit.

You definitely represented my argument correctly and I appreciate that, as it creates and condones good debate! I guess one question im still racking around in my head is the rights of the rich, do they have the right to keep a decent portion of their income, or do we have the right to take the majority of their income for the good of the populace, and I don't necessarily want to paraphrase anyone in specific because it tends to ruffle some peoples feathers, but hey I listen to both people on the left and the right to keep myself informed, and I find something that Ben Shapiro said to somewhat apply, despite it being related to poverty in America versus taxation, but I think it makes a fairly solid point! (and if it doesn't im open to being called out by anyone 'wink wink')

He says something along the lines of (paraphrasing since 30 minutes later i cant find the quote) 'we should be looking for ways to make the disenfranchised and the unfortunate more wealthy, and not how to make Bill Gates less rich' I know that it doesn't have a 1:1 correlation to taxes, but I think it makes an interesting point about how the rich tend to be Americas wealth scapegoat, and how some people could make the argument for the rights of the rich to keep an equal amount of their income in relation to us.

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Re: Tax Rates and Growing Government: Some Food For Thought

by [Joe Kiefer](#) - Saturday, April 27, 2019, 9:10 AM

I wanted to offer you another part of the equation that I don't think you are considering. I know that during the 1980's, during the President Regan era, he had an advisor, Art Laffer, that came up with a theory known today as the "Laffer Curve". This theory, simply put, sates that if you lower the effective tax rates across the board, staying with the progressive model of our tax code, you will spur economic investment that will result on an increase in the total tax base, resulting from a larger number of people paying taxes (check out the Wikipedia page on the "Laffer Curve"). If you look at the first chart in the materials provided (U.S. Tax Revenues from 1980 to 2009), look closely at the dark blue line that shows tax revenue increasing from 1980 to about 2001, the year of the terrorist attacks when the stock market almost collapsed. This seems to show that the " Laffer Curve" seemed to be a realistic theory and could be the reason for the increased federal tax revenues during this period. Even though the top marginal tax rate did go up during President Clinton's time in office, it was still lower than it was during President Carter's time in office. With the high top marginal rate and higher lower rates during the late seventies, the unemployment rate and tax revenue generated were considerably lower than it was during the mid-eighties after the implementation of Art Laffer's idea of cutting taxes to stimulate the economy and increase tax revenue by increasing the tax base. By stimulating economic investment, resulting in a sizable increase in employment, you will increase the tax revenue to the federal government. As unemployment dropped during the eighties, the revenue to the federal government increased, as the graph I referenced earlier shows. As I was just entering the job market during the mid-eighties, I can attest to the fact that the job market was significantly better than it was during the late-seventies. Even though the top marginal rate Was increased during the first term of President Clinton, it stayed within the "Laffer Curve", as the graph shows that tax revenue kept increasing during this time. Today, it seems that President Trump is not only growing the economy and lowering unemployment by cutting taxes, but he is also bringing manufacturing jobs back to the United States buy having lowered the corporate tax rate, trying to bring our corporate tax rate more in line with other countries and making it a good decision to either keep those jobs here or bring those manufacturing jobs back to this country. I hope that this with also lead to a net higher rise in revenue generated for the federal government, but the higher revenues will not be enough to fix problems the problems caused by the rising national debt, that will require spending cuts by Congress. I hope I have presented you with a little more insight on the idea of taxation.

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Re: Taxation

by [Joe Kiefer](#) - Saturday, April 20, 2019, 9:48 PM

Taxation, a very heated topic for many people in the country today. You have those that say the very rich and corporations are not paying there fair share, then you have those that say more people need to have more “skin in the game”, meaning that basically means the lower brackets are not paying their fair share. Personally, I have no problem paying the taxes that I must pay, although I do feel that the taxes that are collected are spent very poorly. First, the top earners in this country, which I am not one of, pay more than their fair share, without a doubt. The top 10% pay more than 50% of the taxes collected (pie chart on Federal Tax Liabilities 2010), which to me shows that they are paying more than their fair share. The same chart shows that the three lowest categories only pay for about roughly13% of the taxes collected, and that does seem about fair to me. So then, what is the solution, spending is the solution! We the people need to do a better job of holding our elected politicians accountable for the out of control spending that goes on at all levels of government. There is no excuse for the level of debt they have let this great country get to. Which actually falls on us the American people for letting them do it. Although I feel the lower tax brackets pay their fair share, I understand the calls for them to have more skin in the game. Its like in the video of the three brothers when the brother lays out his plan of using the progressive tax code to pay for the improvements that were made (3:08 of the 3 Brothers video), where because the brother the put forth the least energy to make a living gets by with not paying for any of the improvements, I personally would have never went along with that proposal, telling him that it was his decision not to work hard and that decisions have consequences, sometimes good and sometimes bad, this would be one of the bad ones. Going back to the out of control spending by government, I think Calvin Coolidge was making a good point about getting to a point where the worker could get to a point where he was working more for himself and less for the government (2:00 into the Coolidge speech). I’m sorry people, like President Reagan said, government, too often, is not the solution but the problem. Too many people in Congress are trying to “buy votes” with public spending and more entitlements. Just look to what most of the Democratic Presidential Candidates are throwing out there, free college, free health care, free child care, higher minimum wages all in the name of votes, sure sounds like trying to buy votes to me, and I am one of the people that could benefit from the free college part. I have never wanted anything from the government other than public safety, security, and keeping my freedoms intact. The more money you throw at problems the more the cost seems to go up, oddly enough. I am going to stop here, as I am getting a little wound up. Sorry for breaking out in a small rant, taxes will do that all the time, bottom line we pay too many taxes!

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The United States Tax Cuts

by [Trevor Mejia](#) - Monday, April 22, 2019, 1:53 PM

I feel that the United States taxation has always been a glass half full half empty thing for myself. I know how taxes can benefit our economy, the revenues provided by tax strengthen our economy, the money goes to help fund public goods and services, and its contribution positively effects our national savings. In addition to helping other things like schools and highways. However, what find to be quite intriguing is the tax cuts. I had to do some additional research for this information and wanted to look at our most recent history’s tax cuts. (At least up to what the data provided in the form material, so my research only specifies up to 2013.)

What I found was at the time of those tax cuts, the United States had increased the budget, reduced national saving, and made it more likely that our children and grandchildren will have a weaker economy which will help with a lower standard of living than what would otherwise be possible. This started when President Bush took office and started the 10-year budget outlook. This has deteriorated from \$5.6 trillion *surplus* to a nearly \$3 trillion *shortage*, according to the official “baseline” “estimates of the Congressional Budget Office. That’s an \$8 trillion turnaround which actually understates the fiscal damage associated with our current policies. Additionally, the 2001 tax cuts expired at the end of 2010, and the 2003 dividend and capital gains tax cuts expired in 2008.

For those who are in support of the tax cuts, they typically deny that the cuts have had anything to do with our deteriorating budget. However, many people have also argued that revenues would have been lower without the cuts. Tax cuts have been a huge factor in the deterioration of the 10-year outlook and our currently high and rising deficits. Understanding that every dollar of additional tax cuts that we receive now only adds more than a dollar to the future tax bills for the next generation. Our current tax burden is historically low, not high, and Federal taxes were less than 17 percent of gross domestic product in 2003-04. The lowest since the 1950s. A civilized society shouldn’t go on a spending spree with an unwillingness to pay for it and leave it for the future citizens of the United States. After this research, I found many positives to taxation and how it benefits our economy.

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Re: The United States Tax Cuts

by [Joe Kiefer](#) - Wednesday, April 24, 2019, 7:48 AM

Trevor, I think your facts may be a little off, the federal budget never had a surplus in the trillions during the Clinton Presidency, it was only in the billions. There may have been a Congressional Budget Office outlook that projected trillion-dollar surpluses but that never materialized. While they did have budget surpluses, they never used the surpluses to pay down the debt. The rising national debt increase did slow during this time, but this was because of the balanced budget deal that was reached between the republican led house and President Clinton, which resulted in government a reduction in government spending. This budget surplus was wiped out because of the attacks on 9/11/2001, which resulted in the two wars.

Tax Cuts are not a bad thing but need to be accompanied by spending cuts to be effective. Calvin Coolidge believed "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- their willingness to work hard, to be honest, and to live within their means."(pg.788 textbook) As well, the government needs to start living within its means as well, quit spending money it does not have, which keeps adding to the national debt that they never having any plan of how to pay it down. If the government does not control spending, they risk the credit rating of the United States that will have dire consequences for every person in this country. So, to put it clearly, tax cuts are not the problem, but spending is the real problem. Congress and the Presidents are playing Russian roulette with the financial security of every person in this country. Sure, I would love for the government to be able to make sure that every person has financial security, but I believe that this is a pipe dream. Every person in this country needs to take responsibility for their own financial security, don't rely on a government that can't compromise on anything.

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Re: The Necessity of Taxes

by [Maddie Neale](#) - Monday, April 22, 2019, 2:57 PM

After reading the history of taxation and listening to President Coolidge's position of taxation, I find myself leaning more towards the side of Coolidge. What I thought was very persuasive about his speech was it was very geared towards the people. At one point Coolidge says, "I want the people of America to be able to work less for the government -- and more for themselves." (1:53 in audio clip) In the clip he also describes the amounts of money that the government expends yearly, and goes on to say that if the government added even 100 million dollars to that amount a year, it would mean 4 more days of working a year per/worker. However, the idea of less taxes, or even none at all could seem like a idea that many people would like in theory, but then when you get down to the gears of the proposal you have to take into consideration how many things run on or are heavily funded by tax dollars. The building of freeways, repairing railroad tracks, major health programs, heck, even the government is funded and run on tax dollars. So there always has to be that certain amount of taxation to keep everything up and running. Obviously no one is suggesting ridding of every single tax because it would be counter-intuitive and would take our nation several steps backward.

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Re: The Necessity of Taxes

by [Zach Edmiston](#) - Saturday, April 27, 2019, 10:58 PM

You make a good point Maddie about the necessity of taxes in the modern day. As much as the US would love to have no taxation, (it was possible over a century ago) our government has grown much too large to not have any form of income coming from the people, without majorly downsizing the role of our government not only in our country but also in the scale of world powers. This is why in a lot of ways I find myself siding more with the concept of a flat tax rate; as it allows us to still have many of these nice things that we enjoy in the modern day from our government while also allowing them as a whole to begin to shrink a bit in size as their revenue goes downward. It also caters to the idea of what many people feel is 'fair', and it is clearly unbiased toward any direction, as all people will pay an equal percentage of their income. There is a fine line however in taking steps backwards, and making small, positive, changes to our country that in time will develop into different ways of

running it, and I think much more of that power should go to the people themselves as to what the future of our government, how big it will be, and how much we will pay into it will look like now, and farther down the line as well. Taxes at this point in time ARE a necessity, but how much of a necessity is up to us as a people to decide.

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History of Taxation Vs Calvin Coolidge

by [Alexander Marx](#) - Monday, April 22, 2019, 8:24 PM

The history of taxation in the United States seems to follow some trends. As was discussed in our class lecture, once taxes are instated and increased, rarely do they go down. This generally consistent increase in tax revenue is shown in the graphs given to us from usgovernmentrevenue.com and the Office of Management and Budget. While the revenue has always generally gone up, the percentages have seemed to fluctuate when it comes to who is paying how much. The smallest the gap has ever been appears to be in 1988, with the lowest bracket paying 15% in income tax, and the highest paying 28%. this is contrasted with the widest gap appearing in 1954, during a ~20 year period with the highest bracket paying upwards of 80% in income taxes. National events surely influence these numbers, with world wars showing huge leaps in income tax percentage on the highest bracket in short periods of time, as well as The Great Depression probably influencing an increase from a low 24% to about 80% ten years later, and then peaking out at 94% during World War II. The other interesting fluctuation is the change in what constitutes the highest bracket. In one year, the threshold for the top bracket went from \$5,000,000 to \$200,000. This is explained by World War II as well, and caused a dramatic increase in tax revenue for the government over the next few years.

Calvin Coolidge expresses a somewhat libertarian stance when it comes to taxes. In his speech he states that until a solution can be found to let people keep their earnings, the liberty of the people will suffer. This is an interesting point to make as a president that is tough to completely agree with. We live in a world where nothing is free, and to enjoy the liberty of the United States you are going to have to pay for it. It makes sense to have to throw a portion of earned money into a pot in order to fund services that benefit the community and the country as a whole. On the other hand, it is frustrating to think of the places your tax money go that have no direct benefit to you. An unfortunate example of this is our country's healthcare system that can have an extremely detrimental effect on certain people who require medical services. Those who see improvements in their community provided by the state are sure to have a more positive view on taxes than those who can't see anything come of it. Coolidge's point of money going to the government first, and once it is paid the rest can be used to provide necessities is also a bit odd to me. Perhaps this is due to it being stated while the permanent income tax is relatively young, while today it has been around for over a century. In my eyes, I think of income tax as a factor like any other expense when calculating how much money you will make in a job; you can't simply multiply your wage with your hours worked and get a sum that is all yours to spend.

History since Coolidge's speech certainly seems to have opposed his ideas on what he describes as a "distinct curtailment of our liberty." A main cause of this seems to be war and the justification for it can certainly be argued throughout our country's conflicts. I believe an influence in our incredible expenditure on military is the idea of maintaining what is being spent so as to not raise concern of whether or not the money is going to the right place. Similar to a business, if there is a large surplus not being used, then the only logical step from a business standpoint is to reallocate funds for something different. Politicians and corporations who stand to benefit from high military spending would want to make sure the money is always being used. Those who define our liberty as seeing our country being a safe and powerful nation are likely to disagree with his stance, and historically, those in charge appear to be in disagreement with him as well.

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Re: Taxation

by [Jessie Shafer](#) - Monday, April 22, 2019, 8:46 PM

The Three Brothers film makes it easier to understand taxes, and why the rich find it unfair to pay the majority of taxes. Many individuals choose to live irresponsibly, while most rich people work hard and choose wise investments. It also explains why voters may be more inclined at certain income ranges to vote certain ways as well. Even though an even split makes more sense in some regards. However, I would argue that the Three Brothers is a

poor example as well, because not all people are In fact equal, and have equal opportunities such as people with disabilities that make hard, or even impossible to work and save money. I think it's a good basic example of taxation, but lacks foundation for a real argument.

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Re: Taxation

by [Zar Oelke](#) - Saturday, April 27, 2019, 4:44 PM

I agree with you, not showing an income gap or standard cost of living can make the video vague. I had never thought of an aspect being of disabilities an how that can hamper a regular income, which had been said in the video.

I will say that there were strong aspects of the video where they did show the possibilities of where individuals lie in income brackets as well as how people use their income and the ramifications because of it. Just my two cents.

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Coolidge and his opinion

by [Aidan McNarie](#) - Monday, April 22, 2019, 9:35 PM

Coolidge, in the video clip, paints a rather bleak picture of taxation, seeming to even hope for its future abolishment, although I can't be sure that this isn't just him feeding into the bleak picture of high taxes versus his wishes to lower them.

That being said, I rather agree with his standpoint that spending should be reigned in, especially during a time like the '20s, when America lived in relative peace. The lack of change in spending as shown by the graph in relation to taxes is disturbing. As a socialist, I believe in big government, but I also believe in cutting spending and in tax reform. The fat has to be lost before muscle is gained.

Are taxes important? Yes. They are necessary. As Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. said, "Taxes are what we pay for a civilized society."

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A volunteer tax?

by [Christopher Bischoff](#) - Monday, April 22, 2019, 10:06 PM

I think that the video about the Three Brothers highlights the unfairness of a progressive tax code. I find it to be pretty informational but it failed to mention that if the third brother neglects to pay his higher share for the construction he would be arrested and thrown into prison. Instead of forcing someone to pay more, you could give them the option to pay for more, and if they feel inclined to do so they can volunteer to pay more. I think it is human nature to not like being forced to do something, but if given the opportunity to volunteer to do something good then people are more inclined to do it, and the outcome is usually better. I also find it pretty ironic that we have established that slavery is immoral, and slavery is basically forcing someone to work. Yet forcing someone to pay taxes is perfectly normal. The only way to pay taxes is with money, and the only way to earn money is by working. Taxation is basically a form of partial slavery. If the three brothers each contributed their fair share (a flat tax), and they still didn't have enough for all the construction; they could either save up, do the project themselves to save money, prioritize projects (Doing security first, then the street, then the landscaping) and do them in order over time, or the richest brother might just agree to pay for more because he loves his brothers and wants them to be secure as well.

Instead of a progressive income tax, I think a flat tax for people making over a certain amount of money would be the most fair. Our current government is known for overspending, as was highlighted in class with the \$500 hammer, and I think the government could survive with less. Another idea I have would be to establish volunteer taxes for certain construction projects, similar to gofundme or kickstarter. For example, a citizen could suggest fixing a pothole on a road, adding a wide angle mirror on a tight corner, or repainting road markings on an official government website. An estimate for the repair/construction could be made by several different companies with varying reputations. The citizens could donate money and vote for which company to choose. This way the people most affected by the change will pay for it, and those who care and/or can afford to pay more might. The result would be that citizens would directly see their tax dollars at work, and I think there would be less frivolous spending

by companies because if they got caught spending needlessly their company would no longer be chosen by the people for projects. Combined with a flat tax, a volunteer tax might be enough to offset the differences between a progressive tax and a flat tax (Not to mention sales tax, and property tax).

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Re: A volunteer tax?

by [Maddie Neale](#) - Wednesday, April 24, 2019, 2:56 PM

I am all for the idea of humans being good if given the opportunity. That being said, I also think that the idea of a volunteer tax seems slightly far fetched for a couple of reasons, the first being that it is clear that opportunities to give money solely based on donation and voluntary giving, charities for example, are often very successful, at times raising hundreds of millions of dollars and in sometimes even more. However, it is a obvious fact that hundreds of millions of dollars, while being a huge sum of money, could not run the government for even one year. In fact, it couldn't have even run it for one year 100 years ago (in-class lecture). Add that to the fact that many people aren't supportive of the government (especially with our current president) and wouldn't want to voluntarily give their money to fund it, we find ourselves in a position where we aren't taking in nearly enough money to keep our government funded. Unless we have people like Bill Gates donating money regularly and generously it would be a very hard to keep the government up and running with that in place.

There are very likely some ideas that you or others may have about how to maximize the productivity and profits of a volunteer tax and I would love to hear them. However, just in my opinion and from what I know it doesn't seem like the best idea at this moment in time.

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Re: A volunteer tax?

by [Hanah Heurgue](#) - Saturday, April 27, 2019, 8:30 PM

Hi Maddie,

Yeah I completely agree with you, I think that the idea of a voluntary tax seems like a really good one but it also unfortunetely seems like a dream that would never happen. With how we live as a society today it would most likely never happen. And even if it did happen like you said, we wouldnt be getting in enough money to where we would be able to fund what needs to be funded.

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taxation on the rise

by [Graciee Robinson](#) - Monday, April 22, 2019, 10:19 PM

All of us have a general idea about taxes, "a sum of money demanded by the government for its support or for specific facilities or services, levied upon incomes, property, sales, etc. a burdensome charge, obligation, duty, or demand." (Google definitions) Taxes have slowly started to rise between 1980-1994 then shot up from 1994 to about 2002 and declined a little in 2003 but shot up again by 2007. (Wikipedia chart) Why are taxes getting so much higher as time goes on? Who is paying the taxes. From the wikipedia pie chart is shows a majority of the people who are paying the highest taxes come from upper middle class to the rich. Is tax the rich help the poor still a thing? For those who are paying taxes I think they want to make sure all of their money is going towards something good that will benefit everyone. This chart shows the taxes spiked as soon as we hit world war two and they never came back down. Debt is continuing to rise so they should be using our tax dollars or at least some of them to help get us out of debt. Maybe that way we won't have to be paying as much as we do in taxes. by 2020 taxes are predicted to be through the roof. At this point something needs to be done so when we are older we aren't having to pay huge chunks of our money to the government. They will only continue to get higher if nothing is done about it.

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ThreeBrothers Analysis

by [Kaylee Calvert](#) - Tuesday, April 23, 2019, 9:13 PM

Considering the example of the three brothers, I would say it both helps and hurts my understanding of saving, spending, personal choice, and taxation in the United States. I think the simplicity of the video helped further my understanding but I am still confused with some aspects. It does confuse me that people who work harder have to pay more in taxes. It makes sense at the same time though. It confuses me because in a way I feel like if you do not want to work as hard as others then that is on you. At the same time if you have obstacles that prevent you from being able to reach the top of the hierarchy then I do not think you should be taxed as much as the people that are at the “top” of the hierarchy if that makes sense. But, I do have some confusion as to why people who are just lazy get the benefit of not paying much in taxes. At the same time, why should someone who was, let's say born into money and never had to work for it, not pay more in taxes? I think it is probably too difficult to decipher what kind of person everyone is and tax them on that individually so our current system seems to be easiest. Also, how can you give if you have nothing to give? As a college student scraping by I am happy for the fact that I don’t have to pay too much in taxes but I know when I am out of school and onto my career I will be a bit annoyed by having a larger chunk of my salary taken away in taxes.

Considering the video and the three brothers, if I was Harry I would probably be upset by the outcome as well. Again, I am torn. I find it unfair to work hard and be presented with the repercussion of having to give a large amount of your money away because of the fact that you work harder than others but like I had said before, how can you give if you don’t have anything to give?

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Nice Insight!
by [Zach Edmiston](#) - Tuesday, April 23, 2019, 11:56 PM

Hi Kaylee,

Taxation is a complicated topic even if you 100% understand it, and even then the moral and personal implications are a thing within themselves! As I come into my own political beliefs on the topic, I find myself asking the same questions as you are; when someone is unwilling to work hard, or is a lazy person, do they deserve to pay less taxes than other people? When you start your career, and start busting out those 40 hour weeks like one of the brothers, are you going to be OK with someone working 15 hours a week contributing less to society than you in both aspects? Will I for that matter? And just to clarify, I don't have anything against those people with abilities to reach the top of the 'hierarchy', i'm talking strictly about those within their own capacity to work as hard as the next person.

You are quickly approaching many different political topics about the lazy and unmotivated getting benefits for nothing, but that is something to consider and keep in mind as we all graduate; and I agree with you about the concept of having nothing to give, what do we do in a scenario like that? Most are helped out by the government at that point, and I don't honestly think my political opinion is completely figured out for people in that scenario, definitely something to think on.

What if i throw you a curve ball here, what if the person that is born into wealth DOES work hard for their money, (theoretical scenario) lets say for example 80 hour weeks? Do they still deserve to pay a ridiculously high tax rate just because they are more well off? I'm simply playing devil's advocate here of course, because honestly i'm coming into my own political beliefs myself, and taxation isn't something I had dedicated a lot of thought to prior to this class. The more I ponder the topic, the more I find myself liking the idea of a flat tax rate, since for the majority of situations I think that is 'fair'. I look forward to your thoughts as well as others!

Cheers!

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Re: Nice Insight!
by [Kaylee Calvert](#) - Thursday, April 25, 2019, 6:29 PM

Hey! I appreciate your response.

Honestly, I don’t think I will be too happy with working longs hours and weeks and having a higher tax rate than those who work less. Like I had touched on in my previous post, it would all depend on their current situation. Like are they in school? College? Do they have disabilities? In these situations it is understandable.

Considering your question, "what if the person that is born into wealth DOES work hard for their money, (theoretical scenario) let's say for example 80 hour weeks? Do they still deserve to pay a ridiculously high tax rate just because they are more well off?", I would say it depends, I guess. I think it depends, for me, on how much money is really being taken away and how much they have/are making in the first place. I'd say, people who are born into money, and continue to make large amounts of money, like Kylie Jenner, for example, should pay a higher tax rate than others. Maybe not necessarily a significantly larger tax rate but higher than the lower class.

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Re: Nice Insight!

by [Zach Edmiston](#) - Friday, April 26, 2019, 12:31 AM

Hey again Kaylee,

This argument creates a tough situation, and don't think that i'm trying to condemn your view or call you out in any way at all; when you play devils advocate like I am, and supporting a view that I don't necessarily agree with 100% it may make it seem like i'm coming off as disagreeable, but its all in good fun and debate!

You're definitely right, those in special situations such as school/college or those with disabilities definitely deserve a helping hand I agree, but at the same time the more we let the government step in and draw the line of what deserves support, and begin cutting taxes for certain people, it creates a tough situation, more so with school than with disabilities; since those with disabilities didn't chose that path, but what is to stop someone from going to a college (lane for example) for one class a term, with the intention of finishing their 2 year degree? Assuming they don't go during the summer that's nearly 6 years of tax cuts for that person for an associates degree, and I cant say how much that would get abused, and I don't have a proper solution for those situations, I just see an ability for someone to abuse ideas such as those, despite me agreeing with your premise!

Good point in your rebuttal! And you're 100% right, we could take a huge slice of someone like Kylie Jenner's money, and its likely that she wouldn't even notice the difference in her bank account, hell, we could likely take upwards of 50% and she wouldn't be any worse off, (though she might have to opt for one less pool house or skip out on that tennis court!) and in general I think that you make s good argument about the grossly wealthy paying a higher percentage than the lower class.

I think the distinction between 'fair' and 'right' comes to the forefront of my mind; it is likely the most 'fair' for Kylie to pay the same percentage as a Mcdonald's worker, but I think a lot of people (including me and I would assume you as well) wouldn't necessarily see that as the 'right' solution, and that leads to a very heated political ideology and mess for our generation to figure out!

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Re: Taxation

by [Hanah Heurgue](#) - Thursday, April 25, 2019, 12:08 PM

After looking at the history of taxation in the United States through several different graphs and charts I have definitely come to notice some patterns. Obviously the word is constantly growing, minimum wage is going up which means inflation continues to rise. Through some research I found on <https://careertrend.com/facts-7426286-average-salary-1920.html> the average income in 1920 was only \$3,269.40 per year compared to today where the average income in 2018 was \$62,175. Now that is just about 100 years since then, but even the fact that it was so little in that time amazes me, now a days I think thats almost as much as what my boyfriend pays in just bills in one month. \$3,000 a year is not even at all liveable in todays day. So after this research it leaves me to wonder how and why things got so expensive? <https://www.quora.com/Why-is-almost-everything-getting-more-expensive-over-time> This website helped me to understand a bit better. Basically we require more and more dollars to be made and thats why things are becoming more expensive at all times.

From looking at the graph from 1980 to 2009 I can see that the total income tax revenue in 1980 was only \$500,000 compared to the income tax revenue in 2008 where it had grown over the years to \$2,500,000. In all of these graphs where it involves years every year closer to where we are now gets higher and higher it is a never ending line that just keeps going up.

<https://www.coolidgefoundation.org/blog/tax-policy-coolidge-style/> I decided to do some research on what Coolidges idea on taxation really was and yes I completely agree with what his position on taxation was. I found that after the Great War taxation of people got as high as 77% Coolidge believed that people should get the money that they worked to earn and he worked hard to get the taxation rate down to 58%. So now, the richer you are the more you are going to get taxed, this makes sense to me as you have more money just lying around. I think if we could find a very low tax rate that everyone would be taxed at and it wouldn't screw the people that don't make as much money this would be the best idea. Will that ever happen? Probably not, I think tax rates will probably just continue to stagger as each new president takes office. What do you think?

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Taxation: Regaurding the National Debt

by [Joe Kiefer](#) - Saturday, April 27, 2019, 9:48 AM

I wanted to bring up a new part of taxation that I have not seen in this part of the forum, a new tax that I have heard form a few of the Democratic candidates, a wealth tax. What is this? this is a tax on money that you have already been taxed on but have not needed to spend and been able to save. Of course, this would only apply to the very wealthy people in the country, but it does not seem very fair at all. I'm not sure that it could ever get passed through the Congress, but it is an idea that should have everyone feeling a little uneasy. If an idea like this could ever get passed, knowing how Congress operates, how long would it take for this tax to start way down the wealth ladder?

Congress is never happy with the amount of money that is generated through taxes, and they are always looking for new ways of generating more money to spend. At this point in our country's history, one thing is for sure, Congress is never going to get spending under control, and I'm sorry to have to say this, but this mostly our fault. We have the power to reign in the out of control spending in this country, it's called elections. We all have a responsibility for this problem and it's time we all start doing something about it. Enough people complain about how high taxes are, yet we continue to elect the same people that are causing the out of control spending. Not to mention, we let politicians use the tax code to, for lack of a better term, "buy" votes through taxes or tax credits, as well as using the tax code to demonize others, such as corporations or the very rich who worked hard and took all the risk to start something that became very profitable.

We all pay too many taxes, as stated by Mr. Escobar in class, when he was running through all the taxes that a very substantial number of people have no idea that they are even paying, whether it be local, state, or federal taxes. We all have a responsibility to start electing people that are willing to deal with all the deficits and debt that all levels of government are running up. If we don't, we will eventually get to a point of no return, which will lead to a great deal of pain that will have to be endured by some future generation. I, myself am willing to go through some pain to start doing to whatever it takes to get this growing problem under control, for the future of this country and future generations, are you?

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Re: Taxation: Regaurding the National Debt

by [Hanah Heurgue](#) - Saturday, April 27, 2019, 8:52 PM

Hi Joe,

I wanted to talk about your second and last paragraph. You mentioned how we aren't choosing candidates that want to work on this tax problem, but I think that we are probably just getting lied to. From several candidates such as Trump for example they say that they are going to do so many things and it just doesn't happen.

And for your final paragraph I definitely agree with you but the part I don't really agree on is where you say that you are willing to go through some pain to get under this problem. I think that several people all want to think that we would be willing to go through some pain to fix the problem but none of us actually would go through it or like it if we were actually put through it. What do you think?

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Taxes!

by [Zar Oelke](#) - Saturday, April 27, 2019, 11:06 AM

In Calvin Coolidge's speech, "Taxes, Liberty and Government" he brings up that Independence from taxes is more important than taxes itself by saying, "I want the people of America to be able to work less for the government - and more for themselves" which I do find myself agreeing with his position on taxation. Especially when you look at the article, "The History of Taxes" by Amy Fontinelle dealing with the bar graph "Historical Highest Marginal Income Tax Rates in the U.S." where someone would be able to see at that time America was reeling from the income tax being at a whopping 77% in 1918. Coolidge had his reasons to give that speech. I believe that his speech has merit, especially when he talks about how "...the earning's of the people can be kept by the people, we are bound to suffer a very severe and distinct curtailment of our liberty" because looking at that bar graph, the lowest it's ever been was in 1929 with the tax being 24% now that we are in 2019 it's 39%. As a nation, we are still higher than other years in our history.

Coolidge predicted that taxes would increase, especially the fact that twenty years later income tax would rise to the highest it's ever been with it being a ridiculous 94% in our country. With the Three Brother's example, I understood what the aim was for that video in showing how three people with the same exact lives could utilize their finances in different ways with other ramifications because of their actions. However, having dialogue from each brother was a bit hard to take serious. As the video went on, it was interesting to me seeing where the money went whether it was the United States Government or choosing to put it into Social Security. For the most part, it was a bit hard to follow near the end when it became about housing developments and real estate. I felt that it diminished the importance of the video as a whole.

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