“(In)stability in human systems: income inequality and political polarization (1/3)

These political scientists may have just discovered why U.S. politics are a disaster

http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonkblog/wp/2015/10/07/these-political-scientists-may-have-discovered-the-real-reason-u-s-politics-are-a-disaster/

“…This study offers evidence that inequality leads to political polarization. Though they have yet to produce definitive findings, the researchers also believe, as many others in their field do, that political polarization also in turn produces more inequality, creating a vicious feedback loop of inequality and polarized politics.

“How does that work? Not only are more conservative lawmakers less likely to favor redistribution, the political gridlock that results from having a more polarized system makes it harder to pass bills that might reduce income inequality, such as increasing the minimum wage, strengthening union bargaining power, or increasing redistribution through welfare, researchers say…”
Reminder: Social justice definition (2/3)

• “We define engineering for social justice as engineering practices (including analyses and problem solving in the engineering sciences) that strive to enhance human capabilities through an equitable distribution of opportunities and resources while reducing imposed risks and harms among agentic citizens of a specific community.”

Increasing opportunities and resources (3/3)

• How can a given engineering design, model, or system increase opportunities and resources?

Who benefits from such opportunities and resources? Who does not? Who might suffer?

• Example: What opportunities and resources are increased, and for whom, as a result of widening income inequality? What about decreased? What impact does engineering innovation have on your response?