

University of Colorado at Boulder
Department of Economics

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Economics 4626
Syllabus and schedule
8 January 2021

Welcome! I am Prof. Jeffrey S. Zax. This is Economics 4626,
The Economics of Inequality and Discrimination.

Course description:

The purpose of this course is to investigate the extent of inequality, its causes and its consequences. This investigation occurs at both the macroeconomic and microeconomic levels. At the macroeconomic level, we discuss the relationship between inequality and growth and the effects of different national institutions on this relationship. At the microeconomic level, we discuss inequality in multiple dimensions. We analyze the individual choices from which and economic contexts in which it arises. We complete this discussion with an examination of discrimination: inequality that arises when disadvantages are imposed through a denial of market opportunities.

This course will meet asynchronously online from 14 January through 29 April. I will hold regular office hours via Zoom between 2:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. on Tuesdays (Zoom meeting ID 925 1333 4408) and between 11:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. (Zoom meeting ID 103 418 5325) on Wednesdays. Appointments may be made for meetings at other times, if these are inconvenient. Course information will be posted on Canvas as needed. Notifications will be posted there as well, or sent via Canvas email. It is your responsibility to monitor both.

Course prerequisites

This course requires previous completion of Economics 3070, Intermediate Microeconomic Theory, or its equivalent. This prerequisite will be enforced. Anyone uncertain with regard to

This course requires excellent auditory comprehension in the English language. Much of the important course material is presented verbally in recorded formats. The ability to follow the discussion is essential for successful course completion.

This course requires excellent reading comprehension in the English language. The remaining course material is presented in journal articles that are written for a general but well-prepared audience. While these articles are relatively short, they are also relatively dense. The ability to understand their content and extract what is most important is essential.

Finally, the ability to write effectively in the English language is very important. Two thirds of the graded elements of the course require original composition.

Course requirements

Performance in this course will be judged on the basis of four instruments.

Questions for each lecture

The first will consist of graded questions that occur after each of the 27 lectures following the first. Answers to each of these 27 questions will be due before the subs

I am happy to discuss any issues of individual or group treatment in office hours or by appointment.¹

Tentative course schedule and assigned readings:

All articles are from the Journal of Economic Perspectives. They are available a

Svensson, Jakob (2005) "Eight questions about corruption", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 19 No. 3, Summer, 102.

7. Intertemporal inequality

Easterlin, Richard A. (2000) "The worldwide standard of living since 1800", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 14, No. 1, Winter, 7-26.

Lee, Ronald (2003) "The demographic transition: Three centuries of fundamental change", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 17, No. 4, Fall, 167-190.

Week of 8 February

8. Inter-country inequality

Pritchett, Lant (1997) "Divergence, in time", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 11, No. 3, Summer, 17.

Essay on American Outsourcing due at 11:59.m. MDT on Sunday, 14 February.

III. The Microeconomics of Distribution

Week of 15 February

9. Investments in human capital: Schooling, training, experience and the value of life

Cullen, Julie Berry, Steven D. Levitt, Erin Roberts and Sally Sadoff (2013) "What can be done to improve struggling high schools?", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 27, No. 2 Spring, 133-152.

10. Health inequality

Currie, Janet and Hanes Schwandt (2016) "Mortality inequality: The good news from a county-level approach", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 30, No. 2, Spring, 292.

Cutler, David M., Edward L. Glaeser and Jesse M. Shapiro (2003) "Why have Americans become more obese?", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 17, No. 3, Summer, 391-18.

Week of 22 February

11. Inequality as an incentive

12. The inheritance of economic status and children's welfare

Corak, Miles (2013) "Income inequality, equality of opportunity,

Bonica Adam, Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Pede and Howard Rosenthal (2013) "Why hasn't democracy slowed rising inequality?", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 27, No. 3, Summer, 103-124.

V. Discrimination and anti-discrimination policies

Week of 12 April 23. Race, ethnicity and the economics of identity

24. The discriminatory instinct

Week of 19 April 25. Theories of discrimination

Lang, Kevin and Ariella Kahn-Lang Spitzer (2020) "Race discrimination: An economic perspective", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 34 No. 2, Spring, 689.

SYLLABUS STATEMENTS

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Both students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote or online. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national

