

**University of Colorado at Boulder  
Department of Economics**

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**Economics 4626  
Syllabus and schedule  
4 January 2017**

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 which arises when disadvantages are imposed through coercive denial of market opportunities.

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

This course will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:30 p.m. until 1:45 p.m. throughout the semester in Hellems 267. You should expect to attend every class. I will drop any student who is enrolled at the beginning of the semester and who misses more than one of the first three classes, on 17, 19 and 24 January. I will hold regular office hours between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. on Tuesdays and between 2:00p.m. and 3:00p.m. on Thursdays in Economics 111, my office. Appointments may be made for meetings at other times, if these are inconvenient. Course information will be posted on Desire2Learn, as needed.

**Course requirements:**

Performance in this course will be judged on the basis of five instruments. The first three instruments are examinations. They will ordinarily consist of short essay questions addressing the material in lectures and readings. They may also include short computational exercises.

The final examination will take place on Tuesday, 9 May, from 4:30 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. It will require the full 2.5 hours and be worth 150 points. Any student who has three or more final examinations scheduled on 9 May has the right to reschedule all exams following the first two. Any student wishing to invoke this right must do so by 24 March.<sup>1</sup>

Two midterm examinations will each take 40 minutes, and be worth 40 points. They will take place on 14 February and 11 April unless class progress deviates significantly from expectations.

Two papers complete the course requirements. Each will analyze the issues presented in a case from the Harvard Business School, based on discussions in class and the material in readings. Both papers must be type-written, double-spaced, with conventional margins. Papers that exceed the maximum lengths, either in physical length or because of compressed format, will be penalized. These papers must be submitted electronically to the email address above in the Adobe .pdf format. The computers in the computer lab in the basement of the Economics Building can create .pdf files from Word files. Make sure that you arrange to convert your papers to .pdf format before the deadline for submission. Speak with me **in advance** if you anticipate difficulty with this requirement. **Only .pdf files will be accepted.**

The first term paper is a three-page discussion of Governing the "Chinese Dream": Corruption, Inequality and the Rule of Law, Harvard Business School Case No. 9-715-023. It will be due on 28 February unless class progress deviates significantly from expectations. It will be worth 20 points. The second paper is a five-page discussion of Business and Politics in the Age of Inequality, Harvard Business School Case No. 9-715-051. It will be due on 25 April unless class progress deviates significantly from expectations. It will be worth 50 points. Both cases must be purchased at <http://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/57668262>. You will need to register at the website in order to obtain access. It will provide you with pdf copies of the cases which you can save and print. The cases each cost \$4.25.

Excuses for the five course requirements will be granted only under extraordinary circumstances. If granted, the excused points will be reallocated to subsequent requirements. The course as a whole is valued at 300 points. The score attained by each student, evaluated relative to those of other students and to the score that would be attained by an intelligent student of economics at this level, will determine final letter grades.

The material to be mastered in this class is contained in the lectures and assigned readings. Students who do not intend to attend all lectures should not enroll in this course. During lectures, electronic devices such as laptops and cell phones may be used only for course

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<sup>1</sup> University policies regarding multiple final examinations on the same day are available at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/final-examination-policy>.

purposes. Improper use may be penalized by dismissal from the lecture, grade penalties or both.

The tentative schedule of lectures below also includes the list of assigned readings. All articles are from the Journal of Economic Perspectives. They are available as .pdf files through the University Library's website. From any University computer, follow this protocol:

1. Access the Library website at <http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/>.
2. Click on "E-Journals" just below "OneSearch".
3. Search for "Journal of Economic Perspectives".
4. Click on "Summer 1987 to Present in American Economic Association journals".
5. Locate the desired article.

Additional readings may be assigned at my discretion.

### **Tentative course schedule:**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lecture number</u>	<u>Lecture title, readings and assignments</u>
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#### **I. The Measurement of Inequality**

17 January	1.	Introduction
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19 January	2.	Simple inequality measures
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Banerjee, Abhijit and Esther Duflo (2008) "What is middle class about the middle classes around the world?", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 22, No. 2, Spring, 3-28.

24 January	3.	Lorenz curves and Gini coefficients
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#### **II. The Macroeconomics of Distribution**

26 January	4.	The effects of growth on inequality
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Autor, David (2015) "Why are there still so many jobs? The history and future of workplace automation", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 29, No. 3, Summer, 3-30.

31 January	5.	The effects of inequality on growth
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- 2 February                    6. Institutions and inequality
- Levine, Ross (2005) "Law, endowments and property rights", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 19, No. 3, Summer, 61-88.
- Svensson, Jakob (2005) "Eight questions about corruption", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 19, No. 3, Summer, 19-42.
- 7 February                    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.
- 9 February                    8. Inter-country inequality
- Pritchett, Lant (1997) "Divergence, big time", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 11, No. 3, Summer, 3-17.
- 14 February                    First midterm examination

### III. The Microeconomics of Distribution

- 16 February                    9. Investments in human capital: Schooling, training, experience and the value of life
- Cullen, Julie Berry, Steven D. Levitt, Erin Robertson and Sally Sadoff (2013) "What can be done to improve struggling high schools?", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 27, No. 2, Spring, 133-152.
- 21 February                    10. Inequality as an incentive
- 23 February                    11. Local externalities, peer effects and inequality
- Kremer, Michael and Dan Levy (2008) "Peer effects and alcohol use among college students", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 22, No. 3, Summer, 189-206.

- 28 February      12. Intragenerational mobility
- Essay on Governing the “Chinese Dream”: Corruption, Inequality and the Rule of Law, Harvard Business School Case No. 9-715-023 is due.
- 2 March            13. The inheritance of economic status, intergenerational mobility and redistributive policy
- Corak, Miles (2013) “Income inequality, equality of opportunity, and intergenerational mobility”, Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 27, No. 3, Summer, 79-102.
- Solon, Gary (2002) “Cross-country differences in intergenerational earnings mobility”, Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 16, No. 3, Summer, 59-66.
- 7 March            14. Wealth inequality
- Kopczuk, Wojciech (2015) “What do we know about the evolution of top wealth shares in the United States”, Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 29, No. 1, Winter, 47-66.
- 9 March            15. Health inequality
- Currie, Janet and Hannes Schwandt (2016) “Mortality inequality: The good news from a county-level approach”, Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 30, No. 2, Spring, 29-52.
- 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, 93-118.
- 14 March          16. Income, earnings and wage inequality
- Acemoglu, Daron and James A. Robinson (2015) “The rise and decline of the general laws of capitalism”, Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 29, No. 1, Winter, 3-28.
- Piketty, Thomas and Emmanuel Saez (2007) “How progressive is the U.S. federal tax system? A historical and international perspective”, Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 21, No. 1, Winter, 3-24.

- 16 March 17. Equivalence scales
- Lundberg, Shelly, Robert A. Pollak and Jenna Stearns (2016) "Family inequality: Diverging patterns in marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 30, No. 2, Spring, 79-102.
- 21 March 18. Consumption inequality
- Attanasio, Orazio P. And Luigi Pistaferri (2016) "Consumption inequality", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 30, No. 2, Spring, 3-28.
- 23 March 19. Poverty
- Hoynes, Hilary W., Page, Marianne E. and Ann Huff, (2006) "Poverty in America: Trends and explanations", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 20, No. 1, Winter, 47-68.
- Smeeding, Timothy (2006) "Poor people in rich nations: The United States in comparative perspective", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 20, No. 1, Winter, 69-90.
- 4 April 20. Children's welfare
- Duncan, Greg J. and Katherine Magnuson (2013) "Investing in preschool programs", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 27, No. 2, Spring, 109-132.
- Edmonds, Eric V. and Nina Pavcnik (2005) "Child labor in the global economy", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 19, No. 1, Winter, 199-220.
- 6 April 21. Well-being
- Kahneman, Daniel and Alan B. Krueger (2006) "Developments in the measurement of subjective well-being", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 20, No. 1, Winter, 3-24.
- Deaton, Angus (2008) "Income, health, and well-being around the world: Evidence from the Gallup poll", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 22, No. 2, Spring, 53-72.

11 April Midterm examination

#### IV. Evaluating inequality

13 April 22. Social welfare functions and societal choice

18 April 23. Preferences for redistribution and feasible redistribution

Diamond, Peter and Emmanuel Saez (2011) "The case for a progressive tax: From basic research to policy recommendations", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 25, No. 4, Fall, 165-190.

Bonica, Adam, Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole 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

20 April 24. Race, ethnicity and the economics of identity

25 April 25. The discriminatory instinct

Essay on Business and Politics in the Age of Inequality, Harvard Business School Case No. 9-715-051, is due.

27 April 26. Discrimination in labor markets: Models, measurement and policy

Darity, William A. Jr. and Patrick L. Mason (1998) "Evidence on discrimination in employment: Codes of color, codes of gender", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 12, No. 2, Spring, 63-90.

Blau, Francine D. and Lawrence M. Kahn (2000) "Gender differences in pay", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 14, No. 4, Fall, 25-46.

Heckman, James (1998) "Detecting discrimination", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 12, No. 2, Spring, 101-116.

Fryer, Roland G. Jr. and Glenn C. Loury (2005) "Affirmative action and its mythology", Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 19, No. 3, Summer, 147-162.

- 2 May                    27. Housing segregation and its progeny: School busing, Fair Housing and environmental racism
- Ladd, Helen F. (1998) "Evidence on discrimination in mortgage lending", *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 12, No. 2, Spring, 41-62.
- 4 May                    28. Discrimination in automobile and other markets
- 9 May                    Final examination 4:30p.m.-7:00p.m.

### University policies:

The University adheres to the standards for student privacy rights and requirements as stipulated in the Federal Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974.<sup>2</sup> Campus policy regarding disabilities requires that faculty adhere to the recommendations of Disability Services. In addition, campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly accommodate all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled examinations, assignments or required attendance. Any student eligible for and needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of disability or religious practice should arrange to meet with me immediately. Those with disabilities should immediately submit a letter from Disability Services describing appropriate adjustments or accommodations.<sup>3</sup>

Students and faculty share responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. All are subject to the University's policies on Sexual Harassment and Amorous Relationships.<sup>4</sup> Students who fail to adhere to appropriate behavioral standards may be subject to

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<sup>2</sup> A description is available at <http://www.colorado.edu/registrar/resources/family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act-ferpa>.

<sup>3</sup> University policies regarding religious practice are available at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/observance-religious-holidays-and-absences-classes-andor-exams>. University policies regarding disabilities are available at <http://disabilityservices.colorado.edu>. Disability Services can be contacted by telephone at 303-492-8671, or in person at Willard 322.

<sup>4</sup> University policies regarding Sexual Harassment and Amorous Relationships are available at <http://www.colorado.edu/institutionalequity/policies>. The Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance can be reached by telephone at 303-492-2127 or at <http://www.colorado.edu/institutionalequity/>. The Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution can be reached by telephone at 303-492-5550 or at



discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which students express opinions.<sup>5</sup> I am happy to discuss any issues of individual or group treatment in office hours or by appointment.

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to this institution's policy regarding academic integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, lying, bribery, threatening behavior and assistance to acts of academic dishonesty are examples of behaviors that violate this policy. Ordinarily, a student engaged in any act of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade for the course. In addition, all incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Office. Depending on its findings, students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to non-academic sanctions, including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion.<sup>6</sup>

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<http://www.colorado.edu/osccr/>.

<sup>5</sup> University policies regarding classroom behavior are available at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-classroom-and-course-related-behavior>.

<sup>6</sup> The Honor Code Office website is at <http://honorcode.colorado.edu/>. The Honor Code office can be contacted by email at [honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu) or by telephone at 303-735-2273. Additional information regarding the Student Honor Code Policy is available at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-honor-code-policy>.