



Inequality and Growth

Course syllabus - (5 ECTS) Spring 2026 - University of Greenland - Ilisimatusarfik

Lecturer details

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Language of instruction and assessment: English

Course description

This course examines the relationship between economic growth and inequality, focusing primarily on the potential and realized impacts of rapid growth in arctic regions such as Greenland. Impacts include those on income, wealth, health, education, and social cohesion. The course will place emphasis on key theories, historical perspectives, and contemporary debates, using global examples while concentrating on arctic development goals. Students will evaluate policies and propose strategies for equitable, resilient, and sustainable growth in arctic societies.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. **Analyze** the relationship between growth and inequality, including its mechanisms, impacts on social stability, and policy effectiveness across contexts
2. **Evaluate** theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence to identify causal relationships and assess policy outcomes
3. **Apply** their knowledge to address challenges in arctic communities, such as resource management, indigenous rights, and climate change

Teaching method

Lecture-based with class activities and discussions.

Evaluation

Students are evaluated by a final exam containing both written and oral components that evaluate students' ability to apply theoretical and empirical perspectives on growth and inequality. The written component is a 4,000-word individual academic essay analyzing a development-related inequality issue in Greenland of their choice. Examples of possible topics include regional inequalities, the expansion of the tourism sector, resource-based development, gender or racial pay gaps, or health inequalities. Following submission of the written essay, students will complete the oral component of the exam by presenting a brief synopsis of their essay and responding to a maximum of three questions posed by the lecturer. Grades for both components are awarded according to the Greenlandic Grading Score (GGS) scale. The language of examination for both the written and oral components is English.

Literature and class schedule

The following section provides an overview of the readings and class activities for each week of the course (complete reading list on next page). The textbook by Dobuzinskis (2023) is the primary textbook for the course and is available in the university library. The remaining articles and book chapters are available as open-source publications or will be provided by the lecturer. Additional sources will be cited throughout the lecture slides, but are considered optional readings for students interested in pursuing particular topics in further detail.

Week	Topic and activity	Reading
8	<i>Topic:</i> Introduction: Foundations and key concepts	Ch. 1 (Dobuzinskis); Chang (2014), Ch. 9
	<i>Activity:</i> Developing a mind map for academic writing	
9	<i>Topic:</i> Theoretical framework and welfare economics	Ch. 2 (Dobuzinskis)
	<i>Activity:</i> Group discussions on GDP growth, externalities, and the Easterlin Paradox	
10	<i>Topic:</i> Empirical perspectives and examples	Ch. 3 (Dobuzinskis); Piketty (2006)
	<i>Activities:</i> (1) Discussion on types and characteristics of inequality in Greenland, (2) How to use Greenlandic data for your essay	
11	<i>Topic:</i> Classical liberal perspectives and examples	Ch. 4 (Dobuzinskis)
	<i>Activity:</i> Discussions on (1) intellectual property and (2) physical property ownership in Greenland	
12	<i>Topic:</i> Egalitarian perspectives and examples	Ch. 5 (Dobuzinskis); OECD (2019)
	<i>Activity:</i> Evaluating egalitarian policy suggestions in the context of Greenland	
13	<i>Topic:</i> Arctic economy and health inequality	Larsen & Petrov (2020); Bjerregaard et al. (2024)
	<i>Activity:</i> Discussion on health inequalities in Greenland	
14	<i>Topic:</i> Policy solutions and options	Ch. 6 (Dobuzinskis); Acemoglu & Robinson (2002)
	<i>Activity:</i> Exploring public and private policy options for your essay	
15	Open session for essay development	–

Full list of readings

- Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2002). *The political economy of the Kuznets curve*. *Review of Development Economics*, 6(2), 183–203.
- Bjerregaard, P., Svartá, D. L., Ottendahl, C. B., & Larsen, C. V. L. (2024). *Increasing health inequality among Inuit in Greenland from 1993 to 2018: Different patterns for household assets, urbanization and a sociocultural index as indicators of social position*. *SSM–Population Health*, 25, 101635.
- Chang, H.-J. (2014). *Boris’s goat should drop dead: Inequality and poverty*. In *Economics: The User’s Guide* (Chapter 9, pp. 144–155). Bloomsbury Press.
- Dobuzinskis, L. (2023). *Economic growth and inequality: The economists’ dilemma*. Routledge.
- Larsen, J. N., & Petrov, A. N. (2020). *The economy of the Arctic*. In *The Palgrave handbook of Arctic policy and politics* (pp. 79–95). Palgrave Macmillan.
- OECD. (2019). *Beyond growth: Towards a new economic approach*. Report of the Secretary-General’s Advisory Group on a New Growth Narrative. OECD.
- Piketty, T. (2006). *The Kuznets curve: Yesterday and tomorrow*. In *Understanding poverty* (pp. 63–72).