



Growth and Inequality

Course syllabus - (5 ECTS) Spring 2025 - University of Greenland - Ilisimatusarfik

Course details

Lecturer: Dr. Brian Beadle, Assistant Professor. -*Ilisimatusarfik*, email: brbe@uni.gl

Dates: Thursdays, 13.02.25 - 03.04.25

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; and (3) *apply* their knowledge to address challenges in arctic communities, such as resource management, indigenous rights, and climate change.

Teaching method

Lecture-based with group activities and discussions.

Topics

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Introduction: Foundations and key concepts | 5. Egalitarian perspectives and examples |
| 2. Theoretical framework and welfare economics | 6. Growth and inequality in arctic regions |
| 3. Empirical perspectives and examples | 7. Policy solutions and options |
| 4. Classical liberal perspectives and examples | 8. Open session |

Evaluation

Students will be graded according to the Greenlandic Grading Score (GGS) based on two components: in-class participation (25%) and a final essay (75%). Participation involves active engagement in group activities and discussions following each lecture. Activities are outlined in the last section of the syllabus. The final essay is a 2,000-word individual essay that analyzes the relationship between economic growth and inequality in an arctic region of their choice. The essay should be written in English, and proper citations are required. The use of AI is permitted for proofreading and editing, but must be documented and attached as an appendix. Grades are assessed based on relevance, argument quality, and organization. The essay should include: (1) *background* on the region's economy and inequality, (2) *application* of relevant economic theories, (3) *analysis* of case studies and policy frameworks, (4) *policy recommendations*, and (5) personal *reflections*.

Literature and class activities

The following section provides an overview of the readings and class activities for each week of the course. 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.

Session 1, 13.02.25: “Introduction: Foundations and key concepts”.

- Dobuzinskis, L. (2023). *Economic Growth and Inequality: The Economists’ Dilemma*. Chapter 1. Routledge.
- Chang, H. (2014). Boris’s Goat Should Drop Dead: Inequality and Poverty. In H. Chang, *Economics: The User’s Guide* (Chapter 9, pp. 144–155). Bloomsbury Press.
- **Class Activity:** In groups, students will create a **concept map** that illustrates the key concepts and interrelationships described in the readings and lectures.

Session 2, 20.02.25: “Theoretical framework and welfare economics”

- Dobuzinskis, L. (2023). *Economic Growth and Inequality: The Economists’ Dilemma*. Chapter 2. Routledge.
- **Class activity:** Students will form groups to **critically evaluate** the strengths and weaknesses of each theoretical framework from the chapter and lecture in addressing the relationship between economic development and inequality.

Session 3, 27.02.25: “Empirical perspectives and examples”

- Dobuzinskis, L. (2023). *Economic Growth and Inequality: The Economists’ Dilemma*. Chapter 3. Routledge.
- Piketty, T. (2006). *The Kuznets curve: Yesterday and tomorrow*. *Understanding poverty*, 63–72.
- **Class activity:** In groups, students are assigned an **empirical example** of economic growth and inequality. Students will briefly summarize their chosen example (1–2 minutes each) and explain its relevance to the concepts discussed in class.

Session 4, 06.03.25: “Classical liberal perspectives and examples”

- Dobuzinskis, L. (2023). *Economic Growth and Inequality: The Economists’ Dilemma*. Chapter 4. Routledge.
- **Class activity:** Groups of students will be assigned different classical liberal thinkers (e.g. Adam Smith, John Locke). Each group will create a **comparison chart** that outlines the key beliefs and views of their assigned thinker versus another perspective (e.g. Keynesianism, socialism, etc.).

Session 5, 13.03.25: “Egalitarian perspectives and examples”

- Dobuzinskis, L. (2023). *Economic Growth and Inequality: The Economists’ Dilemma*. Chapter 5. Routledge.

- OECD. (2019). [Beyond growth: Towards a new economic approach](#). *Report of the Secretary General's Advisory Group on a New Growth Narrative*. 17-18 September 2019, OECD Conference Centre.
- **Class activity:** In groups, students will design a **policy proposal** aimed at reducing inequality. The proposal should take into account the ideas discussed in the lecture, and be directed at a contemporary inequality challenge of their choice (e.g. income inequality, education inequality, etc.).

Session 6, 20.03.25: “Growth and inequality in arctic regions”

- Larsen, J. N., & Petrov, A. N. (2020). [The economy of the Arctic](#). *The Palgrave handbook of Arctic policy and politics*, 79–95. Palgrave Macmillan Cham.
- 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.
- **Class activity:** Students will be provided with **case studies** on economic development projects (and/or proposals) in the Arctic, discussing both the benefits and challenges faced by Indigenous communities. In groups, students will analyze how these projects might affect inequality and social dynamics in the region.

Session 7, 27.03.25: “Policy solutions and options”

- Dobuzinskis, L. (2023). [Economic Growth and Inequality: The Economists' Dilemma](#). Chapter 6. Routledge.
- Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2002). [The Political Economy of the Kuznets Curve](#). *Review of Development Economics*, 6(2), 183-203.
- **Class activity:** Students will participate in a **mock round table** representing different stakeholders (e.g. government officials, business leaders, and community activists). The aim is to debate a current policy issue related to inequality. They will present their viewpoints and negotiate potential compromises.

Session 8, 03.04.25: Open session

- **Class activity:** There are no lectures or scheduled activities for the final session. It is an open day for students to discuss any and all ideas about their final essays with the lecturer.