

ECONOMICS 491/599
ECONOMICS OF INEQUALITY
OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY
SPRING 2021

Instructor: Michael Jerman

Contact Information:

Email: michael.jerman@oregonstate.edu

Office Hours:

Tu/Th: 12:00PM–1:00PM

Or by appointment

Course Structure: Due to current pandemic restrictions, this course will be 100% online. The scheduled meeting time (M/W 4:00PM–5:50PM) will be used for live-streamed lectures and participation exercises.

Course Description: An analysis of economic inequality. Describing and measuring inequality, historical and current trends in inequality, causes and consequences of inequality, and policy implications.

Course Credits: This four-credit course combines 40 hours of lecture and reading with approximately 40 to 80 hours of outside student participation.

Canvas: All announcements, assignments, course materials, and grades will be will be posted on Canvas (canvas.oregonstate.edu). This is the official website for the course, and you will be responsible for any and all information that is posted there. Therefore if you have any difficulties accessing Canvas it is imperative that you resolve them as quickly as possible by contacting the Canvas support at canvas@oregonstate.edu.

Measurable Student Learning Outcomes: Student outcomes will be measured by performance on written assignments, quizzes, and participation.

At the conclusion of the course, students enrolled in **Econ 491** will be able to:

- Recognize economic inequality along various dimensions
- Describe inequality from a normative perspective
- Identify the causes and consequences of inequality
- Predict how inequality will evolve in the future
- Analyze policy designed to reduce inequality

Students enrolled in **Econ 591** will be able to:

- Recognize and describe economic inequality along various dimensions

- Describe the normative implications of inequality
- Identify the causes and consequences of inequality along numerous dimensions
- Predict how inequality will evolve in the future
- Propose and critique policy designed to reduce inequality
- Analyze and critique original academic research on the subject of economic inequality.

Textbook: There is no textbook for this course. Weekly readings will be posted on Canvas.

Attendance: Your grade will not formally depend on your attendance during the lectures, but you will be responsible for everything that is discussed in class. As a general rule you should NOT expect, slides, notes, or other materials to be made available outside of class.

Homework: There will be weekly homework assignments due at the beginning of class each Monday. The homework will be posted to Canvas on Wednesday evenings. You are encouraged to work together in groups, but each person must submit their own assignment.

Exams: The one hour, fifty minute midterm examination is scheduled for Week 5. The comprehensive final examination will be during week 11 (finals week). A non-graphing calculator is permitted for each exam.

Make-up and late assignment policy: There will be no make-up exams or quizzes in this course. If the midterm exam is missed due to a *documented* emergency, the weight of the exam will be moved to the final.

Additional Assignment for Econ 591 Students: In addition to the above requirements, students enrolled in Econ 591 must submit a term paper before the end of the term. This paper will take the form of a referee report—you will review a piece of academic research on the subject of inequality as if you were an anonymous referee for an academic journal. The report will summarize the paper, place the research into the wider literature to which it relates, review and critique the methods and findings, and ultimately provide a recommendation as to whether or not the paper should be accepted for publication. You can choose any working paper on the subject of inequality (with approval). The final paper is not to exceed ten double-spaced pages. Further details will be provided on Canvas.

Grades: Your grade will be calculated based on the following weights:

Econ 491	
Homework:	30%
Midterm:	30%
Final:	40%

Econ 599

Homework: 25%

Midterm: 20%

Final: 30%

Term Paper: 25%

Letter Grade

Grade	Score
A	93-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-90
B	83-87
B-	80-83
C+	77-80
C	73-77
C-	70-73
D+	67-70
D	63-67
D-	60-63
F	<60

Course Content:

Week 1: Introduction

Readings

- The Height of Inequality
- Handbook on Poverty and Inequality

Week 2: Properties of Inequality Measures

Readings

- Expected utility theory

Week 3: Income Inequality in the United States

Readings

- Piketty and Saez (2003)
- Armour et al (2013)
- Piketty, Saez, and Zucman (2017)
- Guevenen et al (2017)

Week 4: Wealth Inequality and the Top 1%

Readings

- Wolff (2016)
- Kaplan and Rauh (2013)
- Bivens and Mishel (2013)

Week 5: Piketty's Capital

Readings

- Piketty and Saez (2014)
- Solow's review of Piketty
- Krugman's review of Piketty

Week 6: Labor Market Polarization and Trade

Readings

- Autor (2015)
- Avery (2012)
- Rodrick (2017)
- Autor, Dorn, and Hanson (2016)

Week 7: Mobility and mortality

Readings

- Chetty et al (2016)
- Chetty, Hendren, and Katz (2016)

Week 8: Race and Gender

Readings

- Goldin (2014)
- Heckman (1998)

Week 9: Growth and International Inequality

Readings

- Our World in Data
- Weil, Chapter 13
- Kraay and McKenzie (2014)
- Aghion, Caroli, Garcia-Penalosa (1999)

Week 10: Policy

Readings

- World Bank: Fact checking UBI
- Saez (2016)
- Atlantic magazine (2016)

Late Work Policy: No late assignments or quizzes will be accepted.

Academic Calendar: All students are subject to the registration and refund deadlines as stated in the Academic Calendar: <https://registrar.oregonstate.edu/osu-academic-calendar>

Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities: Accommodations for students with disabilities are determined and approved by Disability Access Services (DAS). If you, as a student, believe you are eligible for accommodations but have not obtained approval please contact DAS immediately at 541-737-4098 or at <http://ds.oregonstate.edu>. DAS notifies students and faculty members of approved academic accommodations and coordinates implementation of those accommodations. While not required, students and faculty members are encouraged to discuss details of the implementation of individual accommodations.

Expectations for Student Conduct: Student conduct is governed by the university's policies, as explained in the Student Conduct Code (<https://beav.es/codeofconduct>). Students are expected to

conduct themselves in the course (e.g., on discussion boards, email postings) in compliance with the university's regulations regarding civility.

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to comply with all regulations pertaining to academic honesty. For further information, visit Student Conduct and Community Standards, or contact the office of Student Conduct and Mediation at 541-737-3656.

Tutoring and Writing Assistance: NetTutor is a leading provider of online tutoring and learner support services fully staffed by experienced, trained and monitored tutors. Students connect to live tutors from any computer that has Internet access. NetTutor provides a virtual whiteboard that allows tutors and students to work on problems in a real time environment. They also have an online writing lab where tutors critique and return essays within 24 to 48 hours. Access NetTutor from within your Canvas class by clicking on the Tools button in your course menu.

The Oregon State Online Writing Lab (OWL) is also available for students enrolled in Ecampus courses.

Reach Out for Success: University students encounter setbacks from time to time. If you encounter difficulties and need assistance, it's important to reach out. Consider discussing the situation with an instructor or academic advisor. Learn about resources that assist with wellness and academic success at oregonstate.edu/ReachOut. If you are in immediate crisis, please contact the Crisis Text Line by texting OREGON to 741-741 or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Student Evaluation of Courses: During Fall, Winter, and Spring term the online Student Evaluation of Teaching system opens to students the Wednesday of week 8 and closes the Sunday before Finals Week. Students will receive notification, instructions and the link through their ONID email. They may also log into the system via Online Services. Course evaluation results are extremely important and used to help improve courses and the learning experience of future students. Responses are anonymous (unless a student chooses to "sign" their comments, agreeing to relinquish anonymity) and unavailable to instructors until after grades have been posted. The results of scaled questions and signed comments go to both the instructor and their unit head/supervisor. Anonymous (unsigned) comments go to the instructor only.