

**ECONOMICS 499**  
**THE ECONOMICS OF INEQUALITY**  
**OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**WINTER 2018**

Kidder Hall, Room 278, Corvallis  
MW 10:00-11:50AM (4 Credits)

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**Instructor:** Michael Jerman

Contact Information:

Office: BEXL 342

Email: michael.jerman@oregonstate.edu

Office Hours:

Monday 8:30-9:30am

Tuesday 10:30-11:30am

Or by appointment

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**Course Description:** Inequality is one of the most important issues facing today's world. In this class, we will analyze inequality from an economic perspective. We will begin by studying the various ways to measure inequality and the normative properties of various inequality measures. We will next explore the historical evolution of inequality, a topic that has received considerable attention since the publication of Thomas Piketty's famous book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. We will then move beyond income and analyze inequality along other dimensions, such as gender, race, and factors of production. Next, we will consider the real effects of inequality on health, mobility, growth, and other outcomes. Lastly, we will consider the future of inequality and the various policy interventions that have proposed to reduce it. At the end of this course, you will have an extensive understanding of what inequality is, the economic consequences of it, and how we might impact the current trends in inequality.

**Learning Outcomes:** Students will gain an understanding of economic inequality from positive and normative perspectives. This will require the application of economic methodologies and perspectives to the causes, consequences, and the measurement of inequality.

**Prerequisites:** The prerequisites for this course are ECON 311 or ECON 411 (introduction to microeconomics).

**Canvas:** All announcements, assignments, and grades 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.

**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.

**Quizzes:** There will be weekly quizzes that will be assigned and submitted on Canvas. The quizzes will be posted on Wednesday evenings, and are due before the first class of the week (Monday, 10:00am). No late quizzes will be accepted. You are encouraged to work in together in groups, but each person must submit their own quizzes.

**Exams:** The one hour, fifty minute midterm examination is scheduled for Wednesday, February 7. The comprehensive final examination is scheduled for Tuesday, March 20 at 6:00pm. A non-graphing calculator is permitted for each exam.

No makeup exams will be given. If the midterm is missed due to a *documented* emergency the weight of the exam will be placed on final. An documented emergency that causes you to miss the final will result in an incomplete for the course. Missing either exam for a reason other than a documented emergency will result in a score of zero.

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

Quizzes: 30%  
Midterm: 30%  
Final: 40%

The *minimum* letter grade that you will receive based on your weighted total of points earned is given below:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-
93	90	87	83	80	77	73	70	67	63	60

**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.

**Student Conduct:** You are expected to adhere to the university's Code of Student Conduct, which is available at the following website:

[http://studentlife.oregonstate.edu/sites/studentlife.oregonstate.edu/files/code\\_of\\_student\\_conduct.pdf](http://studentlife.oregonstate.edu/sites/studentlife.oregonstate.edu/files/code_of_student_conduct.pdf)

At a minimum, any incidence of academic misconduct (as defined by the above code) will result in a grade of "F" for the course.

### **Tentative Schedule**

<i>Section I: What is inequality?</i>	
Week 1	Introduction and measurement
Week 2	Normative theory
Week 3	US and global inequality
<i>Section II: What causes inequality?</i>	
Week 4	The top 1%
Week 5	Labor market polarization ( <b>Midterm, Wednesday</b> )
Week 6	Intergenerational mobility, globalization
<i>Section III: What are the consequences?</i>	
Week 7	Growth and inequality
Week 8	Piketty's <i>Capital</i>
Week 9	Mortality, race and gender
<i>Section IV: What can we do about it?</i>	
Week 10	Policy
<b>Final Exam: Tuesday 3/20 at 6:00pm</b>	