

# Econ 306: Economics of Women and the Family

Vipul Bhatt

Spring 2021

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**Office:** COBL 3000P

**Class Room:** Zoom

**Class Hours:** MWF 10:30-11:20AM

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## Office Hours

By email appointment:  
(Zoom)

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## Course Description and Objectives

This course uses economic tools to study decision making and allocation of resources within a family. A significant portion of this course investigates the role of women in the economy. In this context we will seek answers to questions such as how the division of labor in the household has changed over time? Why women earn less than observationally equivalent men? How fertility can be modeled as an economic choice? Why do people marry and what are the factors that shape marriage market over time in a society? We will apply economic concepts such as demand and supply, utility maximization, comparative advantage and specialization, human capital etc to explore the answers to these questions. The major theoretical constructs that will form the core of this course include Becker's household production, marriage market, and fertility models. One important learning objective of this course is to improve your critical thinking and communication skills. Therefore, a lot of emphasis will be on independent reading, reviewing published work and presenting material in class.

## Tentative Course Outline

I will try my best to follow the schedule outlined below. However, in all likelihood this schedule will change depending on how the class reacts to each topic.

	Content and Readings
	<p>Topic 1: Introduction to Economics of Family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender vs Sex</li> <li>• Changes in gender roles over time</li> <li>• Stylized Facts on Marriage, Fertility, Divorce, and Female Labor Force Participation in the U.s</li> <li>• Review of Economic Tools and Research Methods</li> </ul>
	<p>Topic 2: Marriage, Divorce, and Child Birth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becker's model of family based on specialization</li> <li>• A demand-supply framework for marriage</li> <li>• Bargaining based models of marriage and divorce</li> <li>• Economic model of fertility</li> <li>• Patterns in marriage, divorce, and child birth</li> <li>• Some explanations for observed patterns in marriage, divorce, and fertility</li> </ul>
	<p>Topic 3: Women in the workforce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender wage gap</li> <li>• College major choice and gender wage gap</li> <li>• Occupational distribution by gender</li> <li>• Division of time in a household</li> </ul>
	<p>Topic 4: Advanced issues in family economics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual orientation and earnings gap</li> <li>• Changing family structure and Inequality</li> <li>• Family and public policy</li> <li>• Role of women in economic development</li> </ul>

## Readings

Below I summarize three primary sources that you will be using during the semester for each topic:

1. **Lecture Slides:** I have compiled these notes myself from various sources and these notes will not follow any particular textbook.
2. **Required Readings:** A complete list of required readings by topic is provided below. All of these articles are available from JSTOR which you can access using JMU library system. A couple of them are working with links provided in the list. A copy of these will also be made available on Canvas. In addition I may also post relevant news articles on Canvas during the course of the semester.

- **Topic 1 readings:**

1. Lorber, Judith, 2001. Night to his day: The social construction of gender. In Laurel Richardson, Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier (Eds.), *Feminist frontiers* 5th edn. New York: McGraw Hill, pp. 53-71.
2. Goldin, Claudia. 2006. "The Quiet Revolution That Transformed Women's Employment, Education, and Family." *American Economic Review*, 96 (2): 1-21.
3. Shelly Lundberg and Robert A. Pollak. The American Family and Family Economics. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Volume 21, Number 2, Spring 2007, Pages 3-26.

- **Topic 2 readings:**

1. Lundberg, Shelly, and Robert A. Pollak. 1996. "Bargaining and Distribution in Marriage." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 10 (4): 139–58.
2. Stevenson, Betsey Wolfers, Justin Marriage and Divorce: Changes and their Driving Forces *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 21 2 27-52 2007.
3. Folke, Olle, and Johanna Rickne. 2020. "All the Single Ladies: Job Promotions and the Durability of Marriage." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 12 (1): 260-87.
4. Burszty, Leonardo, Thomas Fujiwara, and Amanda Pallais. 2017. "'Acting Wife': Marriage Market Incentives and Labor Market Investments." *American Economic Review*, 107 (11): 3288-3319.
5. Raquel Fernández and Alessandra Fogli. 2006. "Fertility: The Role of Culture and Family Experience." *Journal of the European Economic Association*, Vol. 4, No. 2/3, Papers and Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Congress of the European Economic Association, 552-561.
6. Ichino, A, E-A Lindström, and E Viviano (2014), "Hidden Consequences of a First-born Boy for Mothers", *Economics Letters* 123: 274-278.

- **Topic 3 readings:**

1. Blau, Francine D., and Lawrence M. Kahn. 2017. "The Gender Wage Gap: Extent, Trends, and Explanations." *Journal of Economic Literature*, 55 (3): 789-865.
2. Goldin, Claudia, Lawrence Katz, and Ilyana Kuziemko. 2006. "The Homecoming of American College Women: The Reversal in the Gender Gap in College," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 20(4): 133-156.
3. Sloane, Carolyn and Hurst, Erik and Black, Dan, A Cross-Cohort Analysis of Human Capital Specialization and the College Gender Wage Gap (September 29, 2019). University of Chicago, Becker Friedman Institute for Economics Working Paper No. 2019-121 [https://bfi.uchicago.edu/wp-content/uploads/BFI\\_WP\\_2019121\\_Revised.pdf](https://bfi.uchicago.edu/wp-content/uploads/BFI_WP_2019121_Revised.pdf).

4. Leibbrandt, Andreas and John List. 2015. "Do Women Avoid Salary Negotiations? Evidence from a Large Scale Natural Field Experiment." *Management Science*, 61(9): 2016-2024.
5. Goldin, Claudia. 2014. "A Grand Gender Convergence: Its Last Chapter." *American Economic Review*, 104 (4): 1091-1119.
6. Cristian Alonso, Mariya Brussevich, Era Dabla-Norris, Yuko Kinoshita and Kalpana Kochhar. 2019. "Reducing and Redistributing Unpaid Work: Stronger Policies to Support Gender Equality." IMF Working Paper No. 19/225. <https://www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/WP/2019/wp19225-print.pdf>. ashx.

• **Topic 4 readings:**

1. Antecol, H., Jong, A., and Steinberger, M. (2008). The Sexual Orientation Wage Gap: The Role of Occupational Sorting and Human Capital. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 61(4), 518-543.
  2. Klawitter, M. (2015), Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Sexual Orientation on Earnings. *Ind Relat*, 54: 4-32.
  3. Lundberg, S., Pollak, R. A., and Stearns, J. (2016). Family Inequality: Diverging Patterns in Marriage, Cohabitation, and Childbearing. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 30(2), 79-101.
  4. Blau, Francine D., and Lawrence M. Kahn. 2013. "Female Labor Supply: Why Is the United States Falling Behind?" *American Economic Review*, 103 (3): 251-56.
  5. Duflo, Esther. 2012. "Women Empowerment and Economic Development." *Journal of Economic Literature*, 50 (4): 1051-79.
  6. Olivetti, Claudia, and Barbara Petrongolo. 2017. "The Economic Consequences of Family Policies: Lessons from a Century of Legislation in High-Income Countries." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31 (1): 205-30.
3. **Recommended Reading:** *Women and the Economy* by Saul Hoffman and Susan Averett. (You can buy any edition of this book)

## Important Deadlines

	Date	Time	Location
Reflection Essay 1	March 5 <sup>th</sup> 2021	8:00PM	Canvas
Midterm	March 18 <sup>th</sup> 2021	10:30-11:20AM	Canvas
Reflection Essay 2	April 5 <sup>th</sup> 2021	8:00PM	Canvas
Final	May 3 <sup>rd</sup> 2021	8:00-10:00AM	Canvas

## Course Policy

Below I summarize important policies related to this course. Read them carefully and let me know in case you have a clarifying questions.

## Grading Structure

Participation and Attendance	60 points
Presentations	60 points
Reflection Essays	100 points
Midterm Exam	150 points
Final Exam	200 points
Total	570 points

## Details on Grading Items

- **Participation & Attendance**

I will be taking note of the attendance for every online session. There are two main ways you will be earning these grades.

1. Regular attendance and in-class participation. This includes asking questions, responding to questions posed to the class, as well as in-class group work via Zoom breakout sessions. This will count for 30 points and assigned on the scale given below. Note, *frequent* contributors pose questions independently and are prepared to answer questions when called upon. *Well-prepared* contributors rarely pose questions, but are well prepared when called upon. *Infrequent* contributors might participate only rarely, or seem ill-prepared when called upon. *Almost never* implies you were rarely prepared, and almost never had anything to independent to contribute,

or you were disruptive. NOTE: attendance does NOT constitute participation, and courteousness to your classmates is also considered in your grade.

Absences	Participation			
	Frequently	Well-prepared	Infrequently	Almost Never
0	30	27	24	21
1	27	24	21	18
2	24	21	18	15
3	21	18	15	12
4	18	15	12	9
5	0	0	0	0

2. Asynchronous video quizzes: During the semester you will be given multiple asynchronous video quizzes and your participation in these would count for 30 points toward your final grade.

- **Class presentations:** During the semester you will be making 2 oral presentations on 2 papers from a list of papers posted on Canvas under Presentation guidelines. Each presentation is worth 30 points. For this purpose you will be forming a group of 3 students and each student is expected to present a part during the group presentation. You must inform me about your group and paper choice by Jan 27th, 2021. Otherwise I will assign a group and paper for you. The goal of these presentations is to train your ability to present and discuss economic analysis to a general audience. The schedule for these presentations will be dynamic and based on the progress we make during the semester. Details will be provided to you via Canvas during the semester in a timely fashion.

- **Reflection Essays**

From topics 2 through 4, you can choose any two for this assignment. For each of your chosen topic you would write a reflection essay based on all the readings assigned for that topic. Each essay will be worth 50 points and it must not exceed 2000 words. Note that we may not have covered some of the topics before the reflection essay is due. That is okay as I expect you to read the material in advance. Your reflection on topics before they have been covered in class will be even more suitable to meet the objectives of this assignment.

The emphasis of this assignment is on your learning experience and reaction to the posted readings. Hence, it will be graded on thoughtfulness and quality of your write-up. You should try to hit the following points in your essay:

1. A brief summary of the main issues covered in the readings
2. What did you learn from these readings? If any application or example captured your interest you can elaborate on that here.
3. How did this learning affect your understanding of the changing role of women and family in the workplace?

## Midterm Exam

There will be one online midterm exam counting for 150 points toward your final grade. The exam is scheduled on March 10<sup>th</sup> 2021. More details will be provided closer to the exam date.

## Final Exam

There will be one online midterm exam counting for 200 points toward your final grade. The exam is scheduled on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021, 8:00 - 10:00 am.

## Make-up Policy

- There will be no make-up for missed presentations and reflection essays, obviously. Also, I will not accept late submissions for reflection essay.
- If you are not able to take a midterm exam during the assigned time, it is your responsibility to contact me AT LEAST a week in advance to discuss the appropriate solution. This rule applies to both the midterm exams as well as the final.
- There will be no make-up for the midterm exam. In the most extreme of circumstances I may decide to make an exception and shift the weight of the missed midterm to the final exam. However, this will depend solely upon my discretion and you would need to provide the appropriate and valid documentation to support your situation. If a student misses the exam, and does not furnish an acceptable official document, or if the student's excuse is not valid according to me regardless of the documentation, then the student will receive a grade of 0 for the midterm exam.
- For the Final exam, a make-up will be given if an acceptable official document such as a medical statement from a doctor is supplied as soon as possible. I will not accept any document after one week has passed from the date of the exam except under extreme circumstances. If a student misses the exam and does not furnish an acceptable official document, or if the student's excuse is not valid according to me regardless of the documentation, the student will receive a grade of 0 for the final exam and hence will fail this class.

## Use of Canvas

Materials pertaining to the course such as important announcements, lecture slides etc will be posted on Canvas. It is your responsibility to keep a track of such announcements and postings on Canvas at\

<https://canvas.jmu.edu/>

You should check Canvas at least twice per week to stay abreast of the course.

## Withdrawing from the Class

- In case you wish to withdraw from the class please follow the University guidelines and make sure to meet the corresponding deadlines. These are available at:

<http://www.jmu.edu/syllabus/#AddingDropping>

- If you miss the deadline for withdrawing with a grade of W then your grade will be based on your class performance. I DO NOT, in any circumstance give WP or WF, and I will not entertain any such requests.

### **Preferred method for contacting me**

The best way to reach me is via email. I will do my best to respond to e-mail within 24 hours on a weekday, 48 hours on a weekend,

### **Contact the Instructor**

The best way to reach me is via email. I will do my best to respond to e-mail within 24 hours on a weekday, 48 hours on a weekend, according to the following policy:

- I will not reply to e-mails that request information that can be found on the syllabus and/or Canvas.
- Make your queries brief. I will only respond to questions that can be answered in a sentence or two. For detailed questions, please see me during office hours.
- All questions should be posted to [bhattvx@jmu.edu](mailto:bhattvx@jmu.edu).
- Video chats will be conducted via Zoom.
- I will periodically send messages to your JMU email address regarding the class. Please make sure you check this account regularly.

### **Inclement Weather Policy**

Classes will be held unless canceled by the JMU administration for reasons of bad weather, bomb threats, or fire alarms.

### **JMU Honor Code Policy**

All students are expected to be aware of and adhere to the JMU Honor Code. Students will be expected to be academically honest and properly credit all source materials used. For the official documentation on the honor code policy see:\

<http://www.jmu.edu/syllabus/#Honesty>

### **Other University policies**

To read about JMU's policy regarding Adding/Dropping Courses Disability Accommodations, and Religious Observation Accommodations, please see:

<http://www.jmu.edu/syllabus>