
EC 114
The Economics of Race, Class and Gender in the American Workplace
August 3-9, 2005

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Office Hours:

By appointment during summer

I. INTRODUCTION – Welcome to “The Economics of Race, Class and Gender in the American Workplace”, a course designed to critically examine the methods of analysis that economists use to understand and describe the world around us. Economics is a discipline that has been particularly dominated by a single reigning paradigm; this paradigm places extreme emphasis on the behavior of “rational economic man” as (s)he makes his way through life maximizing the value of his resources subject to constraints. The model has helped us to understand the way the world works but it has fallen short in important ways. This has led many economists to the conclusion that we need to develop models that better describe and predict the behavior of individuals in their home and work lives.

In this course we will drop the often-made assumption that workers are homogeneous, that is, perfect substitutes for one another in production. In its place, we will assume that workers carry bundles of characteristics, some that the workers can control and some that they cannot control. We will explore the notion that a person’s race, class, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, age, and other personal characteristics have a tremendous impact on his or her decisions about education, training, occupation, and family structure.

II. COURSE GOALS – This course is designed to

- A.** introduce you to the methods of analysis that economists use,
- B.** explore the connections between race, gender, ethnicity, and other personal characteristics that cause people to make different labor market decisions,
- C.** investigate the role of these personal characteristics in explaining employer decisions,
- D.** develop methods of data analysis that will allow us to better understand economic outcomes,
- E.** critically assess the methods of analysis that economists use in order to improve upon them.

III. TEXTBOOKS - The main text for the course is *The Economics of Women, Men, and Work*, **4th edition**, by Francine Blau, Marianne Ferber, and Anne Winkler. This excellent book is one of the first to carefully detail new workplace issues using basic economic analysis. It is also one of the few economics texts to incorporate feminist economic models alongside the more traditional models. The course is organized around this text. (A newer 5th edition was scheduled for publication in July, but is not out yet. Please buy the older 4th edition.) I would also like for you to read *Nickel and Dimed*, by Barbara Ehrenreich. It is a great book about life at the bottom of the income distribution; it also suggests policy solutions for these problems.

In addition, I will provide you with many readings from other sources; these will help you to prepare for class, as well as for writing assignments and exams.

IV. ASSIGNMENTS

A) EXAMS -- TWO exams will be given, one due by e-mail on **SUNDAY, AUGUST 7 BY 5:00 P.M.** and one due by e-mail on **SUNDAY, AUGUST 14 BY 5:00 P.M.** Lists of questions will be distributed; you should prepare answers as carefully as you can as we work through each topic. For each exam, I will choose 3-4 questions for you to write up carefully and turn in for grading. You may use your books and class notes, but *you may not work on the questions with other students in the class once the exam questions have been assigned.*

B) JOURNAL -- This course will be much more meaningful to you if you apply what you are learning to current events, policy issues, or to your own life and decisions. To encourage you to explore these issues, I would like for you to keep a course journal. **Starting JULY 28, you should make ONE page-long entry each day until AUGUST 12.** These might include responses to articles that you read in the newspaper or magazines (please include a copy of the article!), connections between the topics of this and other courses you have taken, a response to a lecture or other event, or in some cases your own analysis of decisions you face or issues you find interesting. **The only requirement is that you are able to relate each entry to the course material in a meaningful way.** I will collect these journals on **FRIDAY, AUGUST 5** (6 entries) and again on **SUNDAY, AUGUST 14** (6 more entries). I will assign a grade based on your ability to make connections with course material in your entries.

C) WEB SITE – Your last assignment is something we will work on throughout the course. I would like for you to construct a website containing information on a topic related to the course in which you have an interest. You will pick a topic, design your site, and then fill it with links, short papers, pictures, and other materials that fit your topic. We will start these together in class, and then add to them throughout the week. Your completed website will be due on **SUNDAY, AUGUST 21, BY 5:00 P.M.**

V. GRADING -- Your final grades in the course will be based most importantly on your performance on assignments and exams. Point values will be assigned as follows:

Exams (75 each).....	150 points (23% each)
Journal	75 points (23%)
Website	100 points (31%)
TOTAL.....	325 POINTS

I expect you to attend all class meeting. You have an obligation not only to me but also to your classmates to speak up and contribute to class discussions. Regardless of the reason for your absence, when you miss class you will miss valuable information on course topics; each day is really important in this one-week format. Class sessions will be a mix of lecture/discussion, group work, workshops, and other activities. Meaningful and regular class participation can add as much as 1/2 letter to your final grade.

TENTATIVE CLASS AND READING SYLLABUS

The following syllabus lists assignments for the course. I will assume that you have done all of the reading at the start of class each day and that you are ready to engage in discussion. Page numbers here refer to Blau/Ferber/Winkler, 4th edition.

DATE	TOPIC	READING ASSIGNMENT
Wednesday August 3	<i>Introduction to economic decision making</i>	p. 1 - 34
	<i>The Impact of Personal Characteristics on Economic Outcomes</i>	
	<i>The family as an economic unit</i>	35- 80

Thursday August 4	<i>The labor supply decision</i>	81-129
	<i>Changing work roles and government policy</i>	301-319
	<i>Occupational segregation</i>	133-154

Friday August 5	<i>Human capital models: Education and training decisions</i>	155-200
	<i>Policy issues and education</i>	
	<i>Introduction to discrimination</i>	201-203

MIDTERM EXAM QUESTIONS PASSED OUT -- FRIDAY, August 5. EXAM COVERS TOPICS ABOVE. EXAM DUE Sunday, August 7, by 5:00 p.m. Please submit via e-mail.

Tuesday August 8	<i>Models of discrimination</i>	201-235
	<i>Policy issues and discrimination</i>	236-256
	<i>Affirmative action and sexual harassment</i>	
	<i>Recent developments in labor markets (selected topics)</i>	257-300
Wednesday August 9	<i>Poverty and welfare</i>	335-348
	<i>The policy debate surrounding "welfare"</i>	-----
	<i>Changing work roles and family structure</i>	320-334
	<i>Government policy effects on work</i>	348-381

Nickel and Dimed

**FINAL EXAM DUE SUNDAY, AUGUST 14, BY 5:00 P.M.
Please submit via e-mail.**

**FINAL WEB SITES DUE SUNDAY, AUGUST 21, BY 5:00 P.M.
Please post to WebCT site**