

ECON 3034: Poverty and Discrimination

Poverty and Discrimination
Fall 2021
T Th 2:00pm-3:15pm Pamplin 2002
Office hours: by appointment on Zoom

Prof. Suqin Ge
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Course Description

This course will lead students into critical thinking about important concepts related to poverty and discrimination, such as what is poverty and how to reduce poverty rate? Why is there discrimination? The goal of this course, however, is not to resolve these issues but to demonstrate their complexity. You may leave this course feeling that you know less about poverty and discrimination than you did when you began the course. In many ways the goal of this course is to help students to develop as rigorous thinkers. The course will feature a blend of economic reasoning from theoretical and empirical perspectives. Ideally, the students will become critical and intelligent participants in public policy debates, learn to form their own policy recommendations based on their own analysis.

Prerequisites

This is an undergraduate-level class, but some economic modeling and formal statistical analysis will be used. Therefore, students must be familiar with the content of principal microeconomics and with some statistics. Students are expected to be comfortable with conveying ideas through the use of graphs, and familiar with computers in order to work with real-world data. Students expecting sociological or anthropological overview of the topics may refer to other departments' course offerings. Please contact the instructor for details or questions about the class prerequisites.

If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your need and the requirements of the course.

Textbook

Recommended Textbook is *Poverty and Discrimination*, by Kevin Lang (Princeton University Press). Course will loosely follow this book's structure. Additional reading assignments will be posted on the course Canvas site or distributed in class.

Teaching Assistant

Yaojun Liu, yjliu905@vt.edu

Course Requirements

(1) Homework assignments (15%)

Homework will include essay questions, math problems, and summaries of reading assignments etc. They will be posted online. Homework assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date. ***Late submissions will NOT be accepted. Identical (or essentially similar) assignments will all receive a grade of zero.***

(2) Class participation and in-class assignments (10%)

I may take attendance regularly but showing up does not give you credit towards class participation although if you do not show up, you cannot get credit for in-class exercises. I use the attendance information in case your parents call the university wondering whether something has happened to you. I give credit for participation in classroom discussions. Quality and quantity of comments count. I will give several in-class assignments throughout the semester. The dates of these exercises are random and will not be announced in advance. They will be collected and graded based on completion.

(3) Presentation and paper (25%)

Each student is required to complete a group project addressing issues related to poverty and discrimination and write a paper. I will suggest several topics and related economic questions to investigate. A presentation on the paper and group project is also expected. The paper and presentation count for 25% of your total grade. Guidelines on the paper and the presentation will be given later in the semester.

(4) Exams (50%)

There will be two exams, and each is worth 25% of your final grade. The first exam is scheduled for Thursday September 30th (in class). The second exam is schedule for December 11th 7:45-9:45am. The exam dates are fixed and will not change. Students with test-taking accommodations from the Dean of Students should contact me at least one week before the first exam to make arrangements.

Grading Scale (I reserve the right to change these cut-off points.)

Percentage	Grade
92-100	A
90-91	A-
88-89	B+
82-87	B
80-81	B-
78-79	C+
72-77	C
70-71	C-
68-69	D+
62-67	D
60-61	D-
0-59	F

Policies

Class and Exam Absences

Class attendance is expected. There is no make-up for missed in-class assignments. If you miss class and need notes, ask a fellow student. I will not tell you what you missed (unless for medical reasons).

There will be *NO* make-up exam for the first exam. But if there is a documented medical or family emergency, its weight will be shifted to the second exam. For the second exam (final exam), you may take a make-up exam *ONLY* if you have documentation of a medical or family emergency, or if you have another exam at the same time. Students should contact me at least *one week* before the exam to make arrangements.

You may miss one in-class assignment without penalty and drop one homework assignment with lowest grades.

Accommodation

Students requiring testing accommodations must work through the appropriate university offices. Any paperwork must be completed and validated *prior to* the first exam. If you are a student with special needs or circumstances, or if you have emergency medical information to share with me, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible or at a time that is convenient to your schedule and my schedule.

Academic Integrity

The Undergraduate Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees to abide by states:

“As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code.

For specifics on the honor code see <https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>.

Grading Issues

Grade appeals should be submitted to me in writing (email) no less than 24 hours and no more than five days after the assignment/exam has been returned. Please explain why you believe the grade you received is incorrect. I will make the final decision after reviewing your argument.

Health and Safety Requirements

Face masks are required in classroom, regardless of vaccination status. All students are expected to comply with all university health and safety requirements.