

ECON 317: Economics of Race and Gender

Spring 2023

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Office Hours: Mon and Wed 11:00 am – 1:00 pm, and Tue by appointment

Adamian Hall 193

Class meets: MW 3:30-4:50 pm, Jennison 416

Course Description: Economics is fundamentally about understanding the interactions between economic agents. These interactions between economic agents do not always lead to equity, with economic outcomes varying by race and gender. This course uses analytical tools common in applied microeconomics to critically examine economic outcomes by gender and race. Specifically, we will examine differences in the labor market, housing and credit markets, the U.S. criminal justice system, the healthcare industry, and education.

Prerequisites: The prerequisites to this course are ST-113 and an economics course level 200 or higher.

Learning Goals and Objectives:

1. Course Goals

The purpose of this course is to enhance the understanding of the link between economic outcomes and race and gender. First, you will gain a basic understanding of economic methods used for research. You will then explore the research around gender and racial disparities present in various components of the U.S. economy to gain an understanding of (1) the long-term economic effects of these differences, and (2) the effectiveness of various policies to address these differences. As an end goal, you should be able to discuss current issues involving race and gender including the gender wage gap, redlining in the housing market, and policing. The course will focus primarily on the U.S. but will include some key comparisons with data and analyses of these topics by organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

2. Specific Learning Objectives

- a. Knowledge
 - i. Explain the common econometric techniques used in applied microeconomic research.
 - ii. Explain the role of gender and race in wage and employment disparities, homeownership, the criminal justice system, health outcomes, and education.
 - iii. Describe Becker's workhorse model for discrimination.
- b. Skills
 - i. Develop the ability to correctly choose and apply appropriate analytical tools to economic problems.
 - ii. Enhance understanding of how to analyze economic research and draw conclusions.
- c. Perspectives
 - i. Gain a greater appreciation of how policies designed to alleviate economic problems can have unintended consequences.
 - ii. Gain a greater appreciation of how historic economic disparities can have long-term economic effects.

Course Materials

There is no required textbook for this course.

Many of our readings will be journal articles from the economics literature. These readings are available through our online library, and I will also post pdfs to the Blackboard site. In order to be able to read actively and participate fully in class discussions, you should have copies of the journal articles that you can access during class, either printed or on your computer. This will allow you to reference certain passages and view all tables. Articles will be posted at least a week prior to discussion.

Guest Speakers:

One of the goals of this course is being able to discuss current issues involving race and gender. To be able to adequately discuss these topics, it is vital that you are exposed to a wide array of ideas and experiences; not just those that I present. To increase the diversity of thought and experiences in this class, we will have a minimum of three guest speakers throughout the semester. These speakers may come from Bentley, from industry, or other academic institutions. These speakers will present their own research that is related to the general topic that we are discussing in class. When these speakers come to class, students should engage with them as much as possible. To prepare for this, we will go over the material that they will be presenting prior to their visit. Be sure to attend class on our speaker prep days as well as when the speaker attends.

Grading: Reading notes and discussion – 16%
Reflection Papers (2) – 20% (10% each)
Critical Analysis Presentation (2) – 24% (12% each)
Problem and Policy Proposal – 5%
Problem and Policy Paper – 20%
Problem and Policy Presentation – 15%

A	>93
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D	60-69
F	<59

I reserve the right to lower these cutoffs, but I will not raise them. I round decimals.

Reading Notes: Integral to this course is active class participation. This class is heavily discussion based, and in order to have the richest discussion possible, we need all possible viewpoints. This means that students should have read the required materials prior to class and come to class ready to participate. Your comments matter and will make the class better. Therefore, you will be required to turn in reading note at the beginning of every class period. For normal class periods, the reading notes must be 1 page and hand written on the main points from the reading AND two questions or interesting points you had from the paper. For speaker days, you don't need to hand in reading notes, but you must post **two** questions you have for the speaker on Blackboard, prior to the start of the class period. The notes will be graded as ✓+ (100% - evident that you have read and engaged with the paper), ✓ (75% - notes are vague, incorrect, or

not clear), and ✓ - (50% - clear paper was not read or engaged with or is incomplete). A zero will be given if it is not turned in. In addition, you must contribute to class discussion at least twice during each class period. A contribution gives an original idea, adds to the discourse, or gives a non-trivial response to a question. For example, "I agree with X" is not a contribution. 5 percentage points will be deducted from that day's reading notes grade if you fail to make the two necessary contributions to class.

Your 2 lowest grades for the reading notes will get dropped. *If there is a serious illness, family death or other difficult circumstance that causes you to miss a quiz or assignment, you need to contact Academic Services for support and accommodation. Academic Services will contact all faculty members on your behalf.* I am happy to accommodate difficult circumstances as they arise, so feel free to reach out to me if you need any extra assistance.

Attendance: I do not count attendance towards the course grade. As economics students, you know the opportunity cost of your time and how it should best be spent. However, per university policy, you cannot be absent for more than two weeks in a row, which I will monitor. In addition, I will conduct an attendance quiz if there are ever less than 75% of students in attendance. This quiz will count for extra credit on the reading notes. Note that this attendance question will be asked at the beginning of class, so it will likewise also be an "on-time" question as an incentive to not be late.

Reflection Papers: A primary goal of this course is for you to actively engage with economic research that examines race and gender and their role in the economy. To that end, we will have speakers come and present their own research that is related to the general topic that we are discussing. Interacting with economics research through a presentation is a very different experience than reading economics articles or even an economics lecture. **You will be required to turn in 2 reflection papers during the semester.** Reflection papers are short papers that will allow you the opportunity outside of class to reflect upon that experience. In these reflection papers you should (1) summarize the seminar (i.e., the research topic, the estimation strategy, etc.), (2) provide comments on what you think the presenter did well or should have done differently (i.e., were their assumptions fair, did you like their identification strategy, did the data make sense, etc.), and (3) any things you might not have understood. These papers should be no more than 2-pages (double-spaced, 12-point font) and citations (if necessary) should be APA or Chicago style. They will be due within one week of the presentation (due by 3:30 pm a week after the speaker date). Speaker presentations will occur on **2/27, 3/8, 3/27, 4/5, and 4/19.**

Critical Analysis Presentation (2-3 people): For this assignment, you and your group will be required to find an economics article that relates to one of the topics that we will discuss in class. You will then (1) summarize the article, (2) Identify what is new that that the author attempts to bring to the topic, (3) identify the assumption(s) made by the author(s), (4) critically analyze the argument(s) and discuss the implications, what you liked, and what you disliked about the authors arguments, and (5) come up with two questions for discussion. Please be advised, you should not use the main papers (bolded and starred on the schedule) that we will discuss in class. This analysis could include a critique based on other papers we discuss in class, one of the non-bolded papers on the schedule, or an economics paper you find independently that you'd like to discuss. You will present 2 critical analysis presentations during the course of the semester. You can present in the same or different groups for each presentation. A sign up sheet for it will go around the second class period. Presentations should be no more than 15 minutes. You must meet with me to discuss your paper selection at least 1 week prior to your presentation, and you must submit your presentation prior to the presentation itself (submitted before 3:30 pm on the day you are set to present). You should think of the critical analysis presentation as a chance to get some of the literature review done for your Problem and Policy Paper or to investigate an issue you are passionate about.

Problem and Policy Paper: For the Problem and Policy Paper, you must identify a question about race or gender that you wish to explore in more detail. This could be a topic that we discussed in class, or it could be a topic that interests you that we may not have time to cover.

No later than halfway through the semester, you will be required to submit a paper proposal. This proposal should be no more than 1-page (double-spaced, 12-point font) and should include: (1) a statement of your Problem and Policy Paper topic, (2) why this topic is important/interesting, and (3) at least three academic references that address your topic. Citations should be APA or Chicago style. I recommend that you come and discuss your potential topics with me prior to the proposal due date. The proposal must be uploaded on Blackboard by 11:59 PM EST on **3/8**. The proposal should be a 1-page simple outline of your paper, single-spaced and using 12-point font.

The Problem and Policy Paper, which must be uploaded on Blackboard on **5/10** by **11:30 am** EST, should be 5-7 pages (typed, double-spaced, 12-point font) on a topic related to the economics of race and gender with a policy recommendation. Citations should be APA or Chicago style. While the format can vary based on your topic, the Paper should include these basic components:

- I. Introduction:
 - a. Identify the topic/question that you wish to explore in more depth and make the case for why this topic/question is important.
- II. Literature Review:
 - a. Describe what is known about this topic in the economics literature. You should explain what other papers you have found, the data these papers used, and the type of analysis conducted in these studies.
- III. Conclusion/Policy Recommendations:
 - a. Based on your own analysis in the paper, summarize your findings and make a policy recommendation to address your topic.

A key part of choosing a topic is to ensure that the topic is specific. You should relate the topic that you choose to other literature in the field and to theoretical and empirical work we have discussed in class. Ideas for topics can be found by reading the textbook, from readings in class, newspaper articles, or even policy websites such as the Economic Policy Institute, the [Institute for Women's Policy Research](#), [The Urban Institute](#), [The Kaiser Family Foundation](#), [RAND Corporation](#), [NBER](#), the [Center for Economic and Policy Research](#), or the [Brookings Institute](#) just to name a few. If you wish to incorporate statistical analysis in your paper, please feel free to do so but note, this is not obligatory.

Some examples of research ideas could be the effect of discrimination on different ethnic groups, the effects of laws on decreasing disparities by race or gender (i.e., a minimum wage analysis, required maternity/paternity leave, body cameras, affirmative action cases, etc.), and the list goes on. Please feel free to talk to me at any time about the topic you have chosen.

Based on your proposal idea, you must prepare a presentation highlighting your chosen problem and policy solution. Your presentation should contain the highlights from your policy paper including an introduction to the topic, what the relevant literature says about the topic, and your chosen policy solution. You are encouraged to include visual aids or graphs. We will present this in the last few days of class. Your presentation should be no longer than 20 minutes and should be uploaded to Blackboard no later than **5/1** at **3:30 pm** (the presentation file).

Late Assignments: I do not accept late assignments. Be sure to leave enough time to upload your assignment by the due date, and please plan ahead for your assignments.

Submitting Assignments: All assignments must be submitted via Blackboard. I will only accept assignments that are submitted via Blackboard. Assignments submitted by other means will not be accepted.

Academic integrity:

All students are expected to adhere to Bentley's Academic Integrity policy which includes Bentley's Honor Code (details on the policy can be found in the Undergraduate Student Handbook, the Graduate Catalog, and Bentley's academic integrity course page on Blackboard into which all students and faculty are enrolled). The essence of the policy is that you should not represent someone else's work as your own (no plagiarism, no cheating on exams, no illicit collaboration on projects, etc.). Failure to adhere to the policy can have serious consequences, including course failure, suspension, or even expulsion from the university. The best way to avoid a problem is to consult with me before taking an action that might constitute a violation. Though you may work together with others in the class on problem sets, each student is expected to turn in their own assignment reflecting your own work. Taking ideas or words from others, or plagiarizing, will likewise not be tolerated. Please note that the use of artificial intelligence to complete your class assignments will constitute an academic integrity violation. If you are unsure of what constitutes academic dishonesty or plagiarism, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Disability Statement:

Bentley University abides by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 which stipulate no student shall be denied the benefits of an education solely by reason of a disability. If you have a hidden or visible disability which may require classroom accommodations, please call Disability Services within the first 4 weeks of the semester to schedule an appointment. Disability Services is located in Academic Services (JEN 336, 781.891.2004). The Office of Disability Services is responsible for managing accommodations and services for all students with disabilities. For more information about disability services at Bentley, please visit the website:

<https://www.bentley.edu/offices/disability-services>.

Student Behavior and Inclusion:

Our university does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration. Personal and professional courtesies are especially important to me. My class roster has your preferred name, but I will happily address you by an alternate name and/or pronoun. Just let me know your preference early in the semester.

Everyone in this class has different life experiences and perspectives, and all are valid. As the instructor, I will do my best to behave maturely and respectfully in all our class-related engagements and I expect students to do the same. We are all expected to adhere to Bentley standards of appropriate conduct, known as the 'Bentley Core Values.' If you feel that I or anyone in this class has acted outside the Bentley Core Values, please come to me so that we may discuss your experience. If you do not feel comfortable coming to me with your concerns, I encourage you to speak with someone in the Office of Academic Advising: 781.891.2803, academic_services@bentley.edu, Jennison 336. My goal is to work with all of you to create an inclusive educational environment in which different experiences and perspectives enhance learning rather than distract us from it.

Bias Incident Response:

The Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) provides students affected by bias or bias-related incidents

with access to appropriate resources. Where appropriate, BIRT assists the University in its response to situations that may impact the overall campus climate related to diversity and inclusion. Working closely with appropriate students, faculty, committees, organizations, and staff, BIRT plays an educational role in fostering an inclusive campus community and supporting targeted individuals when bias or bias-related incidents occur. More information about BIRT and how to file a bias incident report can be found at: <https://www.bentley.edu/offices/student-affairs/birt>

The Howard A. Winer '58 Lab for Economics, Accounting and Finance (LEAF)

The LEAF's hours of operation will be Sundays from 5:00 – 9:00 pm and Mondays through Thursdays from 12:30 – 9:00 pm.

Writing Center:

The Writing Center offers one-on-one tutoring to students of all years and skill levels. Located on the lower level of the Bentley library (Room 023), the Writing Center provides a welcoming and supportive environment in which students can work on writing from any class or discipline. Writers are encouraged to visit at all stages of the writing process; they can come with a draft, an outline, or just some initial thoughts and questions. Staffed by highly skilled tutors, the Writing Center is open six days a week. Drop-ins are welcome, but appointments are encouraged and can be made online at

Bentley Library:

The Bentley Library supports the research and learning needs of the Bentley community through our spaces, technology, collections, teaching, and expertise. Open 99 hours per week during the semester, we provide spaces for quiet study and group collaboration, as well as computers, printers and other equipment. Research assistance is available until 9:00 p.m. most nights in-person at the Reference Desk and via email (refdesk@bentley.edu), phone (781.891.2300), text (781.728.0511), and live chat (<https://libguides.bentley.edu/reference-chat>). Reference Librarians can help you develop research questions and topics, select databases and other resources, evaluate information, and properly cite sources. Research consultations for individuals and small groups are available in-person and via Zoom by appointment. For more information about the Library's hours, services, and resources visit our website library.bentley.edu.

ESOL Center

The ESOL Center offers writing and English language support to students who are English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Our faculty tutors specialize in working with multilingual writers and offer feedback on writing for all courses at any stage from brainstorming and drafting to the final editing point. In addition, students can receive help and practice with grammar, source citations, Power Point slides, oral presentations, pronunciation, and fluency enrichment. The ESOL is located on the lower level of the Bentley library, Room 026. Appointments can be scheduled through <https://bentleyesol.mywconline.net>. You can also drop by the ESOL Center to see if a faculty tutor is available. Because of the high demand for our appointments, scheduling an appointment in advance or checking the real-time appointment schedule for any openings is recommended.

University Closures and Winter Weather Information

In the event that classes are cancelled due inclement weather (see here for the university's inclement weather policies and procedures), I will notify you (via email and/or posted message on Blackboard) if there will be an alternative assignment or arrangement to cover the content from the cancelled class.

Core Values: *All courses offered at Bentley University reflect our institution's commitment to a set of core values and practices. The links below will take you to full explanations of our policies and procedures related to accommodations and equitable learning environments. As a student, you are expected to review and be familiar with each of these policies:*

- [*Bentley's honor code and academic integrity system*](#)
- [*Equity and bias reporting forms and procedures*](#)
- [*Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\) requirements for disability accommodations*](#)
- [*Religious observances*](#)
- [*Bentley's core values*](#)

Disclaimer: I reserve the right to make changes to any information contained in this syllabus at any time during the semester. In the event that this happens, an updated version of the syllabus will be discussed and distributed, via the course website.