

Economics 69a: Economics of Race and Gender **Fall 2009**

Professor Brainerd
Department of Economics

ebrainer@brandeis.edu

Course description: Economics 69a provides an introduction to the economics of race and gender with an emphasis on policy issues. We will learn and use the tools of microeconomic analysis to understand how economists model individual decision-making, and to gain insight into how microeconomic theory can explain some of the changes experienced by women and minorities in the United States and other countries over the last century.

Some of the questions we will examine include:

- Why do women typically specialize in household work in married households? How and why has this changed over time?
- How did welfare reform in the United States impact low-income women?
- Why do women earn less than men?
- Why do African Americans earn less than whites?
- What has been the impact of affirmative action on employment and wages of targeted groups?
- What are the causes and consequences of ‘missing women’ in developing countries?

The primary goal of the course is to develop your ability to study, analyze and ultimately reach informed opinions about the numerous policy questions that arise with respect to race and gender in the economy. To help develop this ability, we will study these policy issues drawing on economic models of the family, fertility, and labor markets, examination of the role of labor market institutions, and empirical evidence on these issues.

Prerequisite: Economics 2a

Course materials: The required text is Joyce Jacobsen, *The Economics of Gender* (3rd edition; Blackwell Publishing ISBN 978-1-4051-6182-4). Additional readings will be posted on LATTE or distributed in class.

Course requirements: Students will be evaluated on the basis of class participation, problem sets and class debates, a midterm exam, and a final exam:

Class participation and attendance	10%
Problem sets (5)	15%
Class debates	15%
Midterm exam (Wednesday, Oct. 21)	25%
Final exam (cumulative)	35%

Class participation: It is essential that you have done the readings before class and are prepared to actively participate in the class discussion about the readings. You will be graded on the quality of your comments and your ability to respectfully engage your fellow students.

Problem sets and exams: Five problem sets will be due during the semester, on the dates listed below. Complete problem sets must be turned in at the beginning of class on the due date. *Late problem sets will not be accepted under any circumstances.* To accommodate illness and unforeseen conflicts, I will drop the lowest score among your problem sets in the grade calculation. In other words, you must turn in four of the five problem sets; alternatively you can turn in all five problem sets and I will take the top four grades in calculating your problem set grade.

No make-up exams will be given in this course. Please note that absence from an exam will be excused **ONLY** for a serious illness or family emergency that is appropriately documented; otherwise a grade of zero will be assigned. There are **NO EXCEPTIONS** to this rule.

Special accommodations: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately. Please keep in mind that reasonable accommodations are not provided retroactively.

Academic honesty: You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University's policies on academic integrity (see <http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdje/ai/>). Instances of alleged dishonesty will be forwarded to the Office of Campus Life for possible referral to the Student Judicial System. Potential sanctions include failure in the course and suspension from the University. If you have any questions about my expectations, please ask. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.

TENTATIVE DUE DATES FOR ECON 69A:

Problem set 1	Wednesday September 23
Problem set 2	Wednesday October 7
Midterm exam	Wednesday October 21
Problem set 3	Wednesday November 4
Problem set 4	Wednesday November 18
Problem set 5	Wednesday December 2

Course outline and assigned readings

I. Introduction (Monday, Aug.31)

- JJ, Ch. 1 & 2
- Gary Becker, *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior*, pp. 3 - 14.

II. Economics of the household: economic approach to the family; costs and benefits of marriage and divorce (Wed., Sept. 2; Wed. Sept. 9)

- JJ, Ch. 3
- Steven E. Landsburg, "Microwave Oven Liberation," *Slate*, January 4, 2001
- Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers (2007), "Marriage and Divorce: Changes and their Driving Forces," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Winter.

III. Labor supply and trends in labor force participation (Mon., Sept. 14; Wed., Sept. 16; Mon, Sept. 21)

- JJ, Ch. 4
- Amitabh Chandra (2000), "Labor Market Dropouts and the Racial Wage Gap," *American Economic Review Papers and Proceedings*.

Policy application: the impact of the new welfare program

- JJ, pp. 169-183
- David Wessel, "Poverty: The New Search for Solutions," *Wall Street Journal*, June 15, 2006

Debate 1: Did welfare reform go too far? Or not far enough?

Supplemental readings for debate 1:

- Rebecca M. Blank, "Fighting Poverty: Lessons From Recent U.S. History," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Spring 2000
- David Ellwood, "Anti-Poverty Policy for Families in the Next Century: From Welfare to Work – and Worries," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Winter 2000

IV. The economic approach to fertility (Wed., Sept. 23; Tues., Sept. 29; Wed., Sept. 30)

- JJ, Ch. 5
- Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz (2000), "Career and Family in the Age of the Pill," *American Economic Review Papers and Proceedings*.

Policy application: teenage fertility

Policy application: causes and consequences of high fertility rates in poor countries

- Partha S. Dasgupta, "Population, Poverty and the Local Environment," *Scientific American*, February 1995.

Debate 2: Fertility and labor force participation

Supplemental readings for debate 2:

- Story, Louise, "Many Women at Elite Colleges Set Career Path to Motherhood," *New York Times*, Sept. 20, 2005.
- Others: TBA

V. Explaining gender and racial wage gaps

A. Historical background (Wed., Oct. 7)

- JJ, Ch. 14 & 15
- Claudia Goldin (2006), "The Quiet Revolution That Transformed Women's Employment, Education and Family," *The American Economic Review*, May, 1 - 21.

B. Occupational segregation and compensating differentials (Mon., Oct. 12)

- JJ, Ch. 6 & 8

C. Differences in human capital: economics of schooling (Wed., Oct. 14; Mon., Oct. 19)

- JJ, Ch. 7
- Claudia Goldin (2006), "The Homecoming of American Women: The Reversal of the College Gender Gap."

MIDTERM EXAM: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21

D. Discrimination and affirmative action (Mon. Oct. 26; Wed. Oct. 28; Mon. Nov. 2; Wed., Nov. 4)

- JJ, Ch. 9
- Christina Duff, "Out of Sight Keeps Women In Mind for U.S. Orchestra Spots," *Wall Street Journal*, March 7, 1997
- Alan B. Krueger, "Sticks and Stones," *New York Times*, Dec. 12, 2002

Debate 3: Should affirmative action be enforced? Or ended?

Supplemental readings for debate 2:

- Jonathan S. Leonard, "The Impact of Affirmative Action Regulation and Equal Employment Law on Black Employment," *Journal of Economic*

Perspectives, Fall 1990

- Roland G. Fryer Jr. and Glenn C. Loury, “Affirmative Action and Its Mythology,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Summer 2005

VI. Racial and gender disparities in health (Mon., Nov. 9)

- Readings TBA

VII. International perspectives on gender and race

A. Developed and formerly socialist countries (Wed., Nov. 11; Mon., Nov. 16)

- JJ, Ch. 10 & 11
- Francine Blau and Lawrence Kahn (2003), “Understanding International Differences in the Gender Pay Gap,” *Journal of Labor Economics*.

B. Developing countries (Wed., Nov. 18; Mon., Nov. 23; Mon., Nov. 30)

- JJ, Ch. 12 & 13
- Esther Duflo (2006), “Gender Equality in Development.”

Policy application: causes and consequences of son preference

- Amartya Sen (1990), “More than 100 Million Women Are Missing,” *New York Review of Books* (December 20).
- Amartya Sen (2003), “Missing Women – Revisited,” *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 327, December 6, 2003.

Wed., Dec. 2: Catch-up