

Economics 312 (Political Economy of Discrimination)

Spring Semester

Instructor: John R. Walker

Office: South Hall, 321C

Phone: x3337

Email: John.R.Walker@uwrf.edu

Office Hours: MWF: 11:00-12:00 pm, T Th: 9:00-10:00 am, or by appointment.

Texts and Readings: Ronald Takaki, **Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America**, University of Washington Press, 1979; Alice Kessler-Harris, **Out to Work: A History of Wage Earning Women in the United States**, Oxford University Press, 1982; and a collection of articles entitled **Readings For Econ 312**.

College of Business and Economics Mission Statement:

The primary mission of the College of Business and Economics is to meet the needs of its stakeholders with high quality undergraduate programs, a Masters of Management program, and business outreach services to the St. Croix Valley region. Our programs are grounded in the liberal arts tradition and include the application of business and economics knowledge through the integration of the classroom and the community.

Course Description:

The course focuses discrimination with regard to African Americans, women, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Mexican Americans. Discrimination faced by these groups is examined in historical context. Economic theories of labor market discrimination are also presented. The course concludes with an examination of the policies of affirmative action, school choice, and comparable worth.

Course Objective(s):

There are four main objectives for the course. The first is to increase student awareness of the adverse effects of the various forms of discrimination which exist in our society today. The second is to instill an appreciation of discrimination as a social process with historical roots. By viewing discrimination within this context the difficulties of developing current policies to move beyond it can be more fully comprehended. Third, the course intends to increase the student awareness of (and the need to seek common ground between) the cultural and gender value differences which currently exist in our society. Finally, the course intends to improve student writing and analytic skills. This is accomplished primarily by requiring students to write brief analytic "thought pieces" regarding different issues discussed in class.

Prerequisites: Economics 201 or consent of instructor.

Technology Expectations: Familiarity with D2L and the World Wide Web.

Grades:

Course grades will be based on two midterm exams (40 points each), a final exam (40 points), two homework essay assignments (30 points each), and class participation points (20 points). **Makeup exams or late homework assignments will not be allowed unless there is a legitimate emergency.** If an emergency does arise the instructor must be informed as soon as possible. Participation points are awarded to those who read and take notes on designated articles. In addition, students must be **in class** the day the articles are discussed!

General Course Outline:

Introduction. The American Creed: An Unfinished Agenda.

Part I. Spinning a Tangled Web of Contradictions: The Historical Experience of Blacks, Women, and Native Americans.

Part II. Towards Untangling the Web: The Insights of Economic Theory.

Part III. Spinning Some More Webs: The Mexican and Asian Experience.

Part IV. Towards Untangling the Web: The Insights of the Current Policy Debate.

**Political Economy of Discrimination
Economics 312**

Specific Course Outline:

Introduction. The American Creed: An Unfinished Agenda.

Session(s):

1. The American Dilemma.

Read:

Gunnar Myrdal, **Introduction, An American Dilemma**, in Yetman, pp. 121-127 (#1).

Discussion: What is the American dilemma?

Part I. Spinning a Tangled Web of Contradictions: The Historical Experience of Blacks, Women, and Native Americans.

Session(s):

2. Equality, Liberty, and Slavery: Drawing the Color Line.

Read:

Ronald Takaki, **Chapter 3, Iron Cages**, pp. 42-55.

Discussion: Was America born racist? Racism and the American dilemma.

3. History, Stereotypes, and the Economy: Forging Economic Roles.

Video: **Ethnic Notions** (60 minutes).

Read:

R. Takaki, **Chapter 6, Iron Cages**, pp. 108-136.

Discussion: Images, economic roles, and access for African Americans.

4. Black Economic Status after Myrdal's "An American Dilemma."

Video: **Eyes on the Prize: Fighting Back** (60 minutes).

Read:

A Common Destiny, pp. 3-32 and pp. 35-45 (#2).

Discussion: Data on black economic status.

5. Black Economic Status after Myrdal's "American Dilemma" (Continued).

Video: **Eyes on the Prize: Promised Land** (60 minutes).

Read:

Ronald F. Ferguson, "Shifting Challenges: Fifty Years of Economic Change Toward Black-White Earnings Equality," in **An American Dilemma Revisited** ed., Obie Clayton, Jr., pp. 76-106 (#3).

Discussion: The factors impacting black progress.

6. Race Attitudes Today.

Video: **Eyes on the Prize: Keys to the Kingdom** (30 minutes).

Race-The Power of an Illusion: The House We Live In (Segment: The House You Live In (20 minutes)).

Read:

Howard Schuman and Charlotte Steeh, "The Complexity of Racial Attitudes in America," pp: 455-469 (#4).

Discussion: "The gap" in white attitudes.

Homework #1.

7. The Race Question after the South Central Riots.

Video: **The Issue is Race** (60 minutes).

Read:

Jonathan Kozol, **Chapter 3, Savage Inequalities**, pp. 207 – 215 (#5).

Cornel West, **Preface and Introduction, Race Matters** (#6).

Discussion: Programs to break the cycle of despair for African Americans in the inner cities.

8. Women and the American Dilemma.

Read:

H. Zinn, **Chapter 6, A People's History**, pp. 102-114 (#7).

R. Takaki, **Chapter 6, Iron Cages**, pp. 136-144.

Alice Kessler-Harris, **Out to Work, Chapter 3**, pp. 46-54, **Chapter 4**, pp. 75-91, pp. 95-107 **Chapter 8**, pp. 217-240.

Discussion: The domestic ideology and the labor market participation of women.

9. A Woman's Place is in a Man's Occupation.

Video: **The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter** (60 minutes).

Read:

A. Kessler-Harris, **Chapter 10**, pp. 273-299, **Chapter 11**.

Discussion: Changes in economic status of women after World War Two.

10. The Current Status of Women.

Video: **Sex, Power and the Workplace**

Read:

Jean Baker Miller, **Chapter 1, Toward a New Psychology of Women**, pp. 3-12 (#8).

Handouts from Golden and Bergmann.

11. **Midterm #1**

12. The Native American Experience: Assimilate or Be Conquered.

Read:

C. Matthew Snipp, "The First Americans: American Indians," pp. 390-403 (#9).

Video: **Frontline: The Spirit of Crazy Horse** (60 minutes).

Handouts on Native American status.

13. The Spearfishing Controversy.

Read:

Ronald Satz, **Chippewa Treaty Rights**, Chapters 7-9, pp 91-128 (#10).

Treaty Rights: Understanding the Conflict at www.fw.umn.edu/indigenous.
See links "Historical Overview of Treaties and Decisions," and "Harvest Facts."

Indian Fishing and Hunting Rights (Minnesota Legislative Reference Library at www.leg.state.mn.us/lrl/issues/indian.asp). Also see link to the Supreme Court Decision: **Minnesota vs Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians (1999)**.

Handouts on the spearfishing controversy

Part II. Towards Untangling the Web: The Insights of Economic Theory.

Session(s):

14. The Human Capital Model: Economic Inequality Based on Skill Differences.

Read:

Campbell R. McConnell, Stanely L. Brue, and David A. Macpherson, **Contemporary Labor Economics, 5th Edition**, Chapter 4, pp. 86-123 (#11).

Discussion: Human capital and race, ethnic and gender inequality based on individual choice.

Homework #2

15. Constraints on the Supply Side of the Labor Market: Race, Gender and the Question of Equal Access to Human Capital.

Read:

Barbara R. Bergmann, **The Task of Feminist Economics: A More Equitable Future**, pp. 46-49 (#12).

Paula England, **The Sex Gap in Wages and Work**, pp. 68-70 (#13).

Victor R. Fuchs, **The Changing Economic Condition of Women**, in **The Senior Economist**, Oct, 1989, pp. 3-4 & 12 (#14).

Handout: **"The Fight Brewing Over Family Leave,"** Aaron Bernstein, 2005

Discussion: Supply side constraints which exist for women and African Americans.

16. Constraints on the Supply Side of the Labor Market: Social Class and the Question of Equal Access to Human Capital?

Read:

Samuel Bowles, **Schooling and the Reproduction of Inequality** in R.C. Edwards, Michael Reich and Thomas Weisskopf, eds., **The Capitalist System, Second Edition**, pp. 315-329 (#15).

Discussion: Breaking down class based inequalities in education.

17. Problems on the Demand Side: Neoclassical Models of Discrimination.

Read:

McConnell et. al, **Contemporary Labor Economics, 5th Edition**, Chapter 14, pp. 436-456 (#16).

Discussion: Neoclassical economics and the colorblind economy.

18. The Institutional and Marxian Views of Discrimination.

Read:

Ray Marshall and Beth Paulin, **The Wages of Women's Work**, pp. 28-38 (#17).

Paula England, **The Sex Gap in Wages and Work**, pp. 70-74 (#18).

Michael Reich, **The Economics of Racism** in, R.C. Edwards, M. Reich and T. Weisskopf, eds, **The Capitalist System, Second Edition**, pp. 381-388 (#19).

Discussion: Compare Neoclassical, Liberal and Marxian views of discrimination. What policies do they recommend?

19. Empirical Estimates of Earnings Differences: Does Race, Ethnicity, and Gender Really Matter in the Labor Market?

Read:

Reynolds Farley, "Blacks, Hispanics, and White Ethnic Groups: Are Blacks Uniquely Disadvantaged?," in **Notable Selections in Race and Ethnicity, 2nd Edition** (1998), pp. 248-256 (#20).

Francine Blau and Lawrence Kahn "Gender Differences in Pay," **Journal of Economic Perspectives**, 14(4), 2000, pp. 75-99 (#21).

Part III. Spinning Some More Webs: The Mexican, Japanese and Chinese Experience.

Session(s):

20. The Mexican Experience.

Read:

R. Takaki, **Iron Cages**, **Chapter 7**, pp. 147-170.

Video: **Frontline: New Harvest - Old Shame** (60 minutes).

Handouts on Economic Status.

Discussion: Supply side and demand side barriers faced by Mexican immigrants.

21. **Midterm #2**

22. The Asian Experience.

Read:

R. Takaki, **Iron Cages**, **Chapter 10**, pp. 215-249.

Videos: **Race –The Power of an Illusion: The House We Live In** (Segment: White By Law (20 minutes))

Unfinished Business.

23. Asian's as the "Model Immigrants."

Read:

Robert H. Suzuki, **Asian Americans as the "Model Minority,"** in Change, Nov/Dec, 1989, pp. 13-19 (#24).

Franklin Foer: **Asian America Discovers Identity Politics,** New Republic, 225(1), 2001 (#25).

Discussion: Do we need affirmative action?

Part IV. Towards Untangling the Web: The Insights of the Current Policy Debate.

Session(s):

24. Colorblind or Color Conscious?: The Debate Over Affirmative Action.

Read:

Nathan Glazer, Ethnic Dilemma, Chapter 9 (Affirmative Discrimination), pp. 159-181 (#26).

Alexander Aleinikoff, **A Case For Race Consciousness,** Columbia Law Review, 1992, pp. 1060-1072, pp. 1078-1095, pp. 1113-1125 (#27).

Video: **Race—The Power of an Illusion: The House We Live In** (Segment: Colorblind Society? (10 minutes))

Handouts: University of Michigan cases “Gratz vs Bollinger (undergraduate)” and “Grutter vs Bollinger (law school)” cases.

25. College Entrance and Affirmative Action

Video: **Frontline: Secrets of the SAT.**

Discussion: 2003 Supreme Court rulings in “Gratz vs Bollinger” and “Grutter vs Bollinger.”

26. Educational Reform: School Choice.

Read:

Mark Harrison, “Public Problems, Private Solutions: School Choice and Its Consequences,” Cato Journal **25(2)**, 2005 pp.197-215 (#28).

“Change gotta come,” The Economist, May 22, 2004 (#29).

Video: **Frontline: The Battle Over School Choice**

Discussion: Is school choice the ticket to racial integration in public education?

27. Immigration.

Read:

George J. Borjas, **The New Economics of Immigration,** The Atlantic Monthly, December, 1996 (#30).

Discussion: Should we restrict immigration?

28. Comparable Worth.

Read:

Barbara Bergman, **Pay Equity: Surprising Answers to Hard Questions**, in Challenge, May/June 1987, pp. 45-51 (#31).

June O'Neill, **An Argument for the Marketplace**, in Society, pp. 55-60 (#32).

Ray Marshall and Beth Paulin, **The Wages of Women's Work**, pp. 28-38 (#19).

Discussion: Comparable worth vs the market in determining the "just wage" for women.

Final Exam-----Friday, May 11, 7:45-9:45 am.