Discovery Seminar: Economic Inequality: Friend or Foe? Fall 2025
Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:00 pm – 2:15 pm
Johnson Hall 101



Course Information

Faculty Information

Dr. Jasminka Ninkovic
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Office: Seney Hall 318
Office Hours:

- Tu 11:30 pm – 12:30 pm or by appointment
- Student hours are held in person or on zoom. I will be in my office for regular student hours and on zoom for the ones arranged outside of the regular schedule.
- Use email to schedule an appointment if the regular times do not fit into your schedule.

Course Description

Inequality has been at the center of recent media and academic debates. Central to these debates is the emerging picture of increasing inequality within and across countries during the last several decades despite economic growth and a general increase in living standards. However, the picture of increasing inequality and/or its harmful effects has been challenged in academic literature. We will try to shed light on both sides of the debate.
The focus of this course will be on both – the story of how inequality comes to be, and what the consequences of inequality are. To explore these questions, we will investigate the sources of economic growth, measures of quality of life, clarify the distinction between inequality and poverty, point out to

different types of inequality, investigate the relationship between inequality and efficiency, and critically explore positive and negative implications of inequality. As part of this inquiry, students will also engage with Aristotelian concepts of virtue, considering how personal and civic virtues can inform responses to inequality and contribute to a more just society.

At the end of this course, students will be able to apply knowledge and research skills learned in class to look for an answer to a specific question that reflects their learning in this course.

Student learning outcomes

(1) Students will be able to distinguish between poverty and inequality
(2) Students will be able to explain the relationship between equality and efficiency
(3) Students will be able to explain the causes and consequences of inequality
(4) Students will be able to calculate and interpret measures of inequality
(5) Students will be able to evaluate economic policies related to inequality
(6) Students will be able to reflect on the role of personal and civic virtues in addressing economic inequality, and apply Aristotelian concepts of virtue to their own learning and decision-making (7) Students will be able to apply information literacy and oral communication skills to inquire about a question of their interest

Course materials

Textbook (Required)

The Core Team: The Economy: **Economics for a Changing World**, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, open access. [ECW]

The Core Team: **Core Insights: A World of Differences: an Introduction to Inequality**. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, open access [CI]

Additional Readings (Required)

Additional readings, videos and other learning resources will be made available through library reserves or on the course Canvas site.

Expectations and Policies

For students For the instructor

a. Please be prepared for the class b. Participate and be active in class c. Listen and respect others d. Be comfortable taking risks e. Turn off your cell phones f. Be punctual for all classes g. Discuss class concerns either after class or during designated office meetings	a. Be prepared for class b. Be active and facilitate students' learning c. Listen and respect students' views d. Respond swiftly and effectively to students' concerns e. Turn off cell phone f. Grade objectively, consistently and in a timely manner g. Accommodate differences in students' learning

Please remember, if you have any questions, concerns or comments, to let me know. I welcome any feedback you are willing to offer.

Conduct

Emory University's ideals of inclusivity require that we foster an environment where people of diverse backgrounds, identities, abilities, and ideologies are affirmed, respected, and seen as a source of strength; where we strive to learn together, and ultimately thrive communally. If we at all fail to support these ideals, then I encourage discussion towards improvement, and I hope that this statement affirms your right to seek those discussions via dialogue with faculty, staff, your peers.

I treat this course as a "two-way" street. My goal is to provide the best education possible for you while covering the topics that need to be discussed during the semester. If at any point you have suggestions or comments, I welcome them. If I am going too fast in class, or too slow, say so. If something is unclear, ask for clarification or help. I will not be able to adjust things without knowing about them.

Plagiarism / Academic Honesty Policy

The Honor Code applies to all assignments, in and out of the classroom. All work in this course must be entirely your own and entirely original to the requirements of this course in this semester. For more info, visit: http://oxford.emory.edu/catalog/regulations/honor-code.html

Using an artificial intelligence program to generate any content for any assignment in this course (including, but not limited to examinations, papers, homework, and creative work) may constitute plagiarism and be a violation of the Honor Code.
There are three possible situations:

a) Assignment doesn't mention the use of AI – don't use it. Otherwise, it would be violation of Honor Code.

b) Use of AI is “not suggested” and you use it. You are responsible to detail/describe the use. Otherwise, it would be considered violation of Honor Code.
c) If there are assignments where AI are permitted or you are asked to use it, the expectations will be clearly stated.

Any suspicion of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Council.

Communication

Communication is a two-way street. If you are having any difficulties, inside of class or outside of class, please communicate to me as soon as possible. I am here to help you learn and to feel good about it.

Canvas will be our main communication platform. Please monitor closely Canvas announcements and in-class announcements for any updates to content or course changes, as needed.

Please either set your notifications so that you get emails about new announcements posted or check Canvas frequently. You are responsible for any announcements or assignments made in class or posted on Canvas.

Zoom will be our communication tool during office hours.

Email is used to book an office hours appointment and for questions that are more personal in nature so that we can work towards a solution.

Navigate system will be used to schedule advising appointments.

Late Assignment Policy

In general, assignments in this course can’t be accepted late. If there is a room for flexibility, I leave assignments available after due date for a specific period and don’t subtract points for this period. Once availability date is over, assignments can’t be submitted.

Please refrain from submitting assignments through email. It is impossible for me to keep track of them with the number of students I teach. All submissions need to happen through Canvas.

Coursework

There will be several types of assignments in this course listed as below. The details for each type and how they will be graded follow.

Pre-class readings - each max 10 points
Class engagement and attendance each day max 8 points
Listening notes max 20 points

In class and outside of class work submissions max 30 points
Monthly journaling on virtue in class max 30 points
Presentation of the articles each max 50 points
Project presentation max 300 points
Project reflection max 100 points
Project paper max 150 points
Extra credit journaling on habit development and final reflection on it - 4% on top of the grade each week 10 points.

Grading:
Blue – on four tier scheme
Black – through more detailed rubric and feedback
Green – extra credit

Four tier grading scheme

Excellent (100%) Work meets or exceeds all expectations for the assignment. It is thorough, accurate, and demonstrates strong understanding of the material. Writing, calculations, and/or presentation are clear, well-organized, and complete.

Good (75%) Work meets most expectations for the assignment. It is mostly accurate and complete, with minor gaps or errors. Shows good understanding of the material, but may need stronger depth, clarity, or organization.

Acceptable (50%) Work meets some expectations for the assignment. It shows partial understanding of the material and/or contains significant gaps, omissions, or errors. Additional effort and improvement needed.

No Credit 0 Work is missing, incomplete, or does not demonstrate understanding of the material. Does not meet minimum requirements for credit.
Pre-class readings (max 10 points). will serve the purpose of making you accountable for reading before class. By answering questions - what did you learn and what is still unclear, you will help me create most useful class experience for you. Can not be accepted late. Submitting them during class would be considered "not completed".

Will be graded on four tier scheme.

Class engagement and attendance each day (max 8 points). Actively participating in class serves the purpose of creating sense of community, supports your own learning and learning of

the others. It doesn't necessarily mean that you have to "talk a lot". Active participation means meaningful engagement with the class. Clarifying questions, constructive contributions to class discussions are good ways to engage in class. Furthermore, being patient and give others chance to talk is another way to contribute positively to class cohesion. Some of us are faster to form our thoughts and to express them loudly, others take time. Encouraging each other to share our thoughts is a way to learn from each other and about each other. Learning the names of your classmates is showing respect and effort to get to know each other.

Electronic devices will be used in this course for the purpose of learning. If it turns out that they impede your focus and you use them for different purposes, this will be reflected on your grade in this category.

You are allowed 3 unexcused absences. This is done to crate flexibility for the times when you need that time for predictable tasks related to school or other obligations. In a case of medical reasons for not attending the class, I will need documentation that will be provided through the Advising Center for these to be excused.

Will be graded on four tier scheme.

Listening notes (max 20 points) will be taken and submitted during class when your classmates present.

Will be graded on four tier scheme. Can't be accepted late.

In class and outside of class work submissions (max 30 points).
Graded on four tier scheme.

Monthly journaling on virtue in class (max 30 points)
There will be two in class opportunities to reflect on ethical virtues and their relationships with inequality.
Presentation of the articles each max 50 points. Some readings in the course will come from different types of articles written and published in different venues. The goal of reading and presenting these in class is for you to learn about types of sources that exist and are reliable, as well as to practice your oral presentation skills. Depending on the length of the articles several students will be assigned to present one article and will be collaborating outside of the class to create presentations. Details about expectations will be given on Canvas. Students who will be listening will take notes and submit them as part of their ***Listening Notes*** assignment.

Project presentation (max 300 points), Project reflection (max 100 points) and Project paper

(max 150 points) will be the final assessments in this course. In team of 2-3 members you will choose a topic of your interest and create a presentation for your classmates. The details about expectations, deadlines and submissions will be provided on Canvas as we go.

Extra credit journaling on habit development and final reflection on it - 4% on top of the grade each week 10 points. It is all or nothing category. You can't earn less than 4% by doing some of the journaling. If you have reasons to be late with an assignment in this category, I can consider extending it.

Schedule DS 2025 (tentative)

1	Week 1, 8/25	Syllabus, Intro
2	Week 2, 9/1	On being truly educated – N. Chomsky video Inequality Friend or Foe – Intro VIA Character Survey
3	Week 3, 9/8	Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics Choose a virtue Capitalist Revolution – part I Weekly Prompt 1 – Choose a virtue
4	Week 4, 9/15	Capitalist Revolution I cont. Presentation: Milanovic on Clash of Capitalisms Capitalist Revolution II – Part II Weekly Prompt 2 – Starting Habits
5	Week 5, 9/22	Capitalist revolution – Part II cont. Easterlin and SSW presentations Weekly Prompt 3 – Early Obstacles
6	Week 6, 9/29	Core Insights Part 3 Presentation: Milanovic on Global Inequality CPD visit 1 Weekly Prompt 4 – Everyday Actions

7 Week 7, 10/6 Core Insights Part 2 & 4
Weekly Prompt 5 – Virtue in an Unequal World
Class Reflection on Virtue 1

8	Week 8, 10/13	*Fall Break* CPD visit 2 Presentation: Intergenerational Inequality Weekly Prompt 6 – Halfway Reflection
9	Week 9, 10/20	Theories of Justice Presentation: Berg and Ostry on Equity vs. Efficiency Weekly Prompt 7 – Role Models
10	Week 10, 10/27	Reading on Trade-off between Efficiency and Equality Library visit Weekly Prompt 8 – Resources and Support
11	Week 11, 11/3	CPD visit 3 Work on Project Weekly Prompt 9 – Virtue Under Pressure
12	Week 12, 11/10	Work on Project Class Reflection on Virtue 2 Weekly Prompt 10 – Lessons from Mistakes
13	Week 13, 11/17	Work on Project Weekly Prompt 11 – Relationships
14	Week 14, 11/24	Work on Project *Thanksgiving Break* Final Reflection on Virtue Practice
15	Week 15, 12/1	Project Presentations
16	Week 16, 12/8	Project Presentations Celebration

Dec 11, Monday Final exam time 3:00 – 5:30 pm (if Project Presentations not finished in class)

Policies and Additional Resources

Accommodations

• If you have a documented disability and have anticipated barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, or presume having a disability (e.g. mental health, attention,

learning, vision, hearing, physical or systemic), and are in need of accommodations for this semester, we encourage you to contact the Department of Accessibility Services (DAS) to learn more about the registration process and steps for requesting accommodations at accessibility@emory.edu

• If you are a student currently registered with DAS and have not requested or received a copy of your accommodation notification letter, please notify DAS immediately at accessibility@emory.edu

• Students who have accommodations in place are encouraged to coordinate with their professor during the first week of the semester, to communicate specific needs for the course as it relates to approved accommodations.

• Accommodations may not be implemented until the instructor is provided an accommodation letter and discusses the accommodation plan for this course directly with the DAS student. Accommodations may not be implemented retroactively.

For additional information regarding DAS, please visit the website:
https://accessibility.emory.edu/students/index.html

Religious Accommodation Policy

Students seeking academic accommodations for religious observance should submit their requests to the instructor by email as early as possible in advance. If you have questions or concerns about your request, you may contact , the College Chaplain, Rev. Lyn Pace, ppace@emory.edu, Oxford Student Center 224, the Ombuds Office, or the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC). Academic accommodations for religious observance do not relieve students of responsibility for the completion of any part of the coursework they may miss as the result of a religious observance.

Emory's official list of religious holidays may be found at
https://www.religiouslife.emory.edu/about_us/holidays.html

Title IX Reporting

Title IX Reporting: Every Emory employee who is informed about an allegation of sexual misconduct involving any student is required to notify a Title IX Coordinator either directly or through their relevant reporting structure. However, employees who serve in a professional role in which communications are afforded confidential status under the law (e.g., medical providers, therapists, and professional and pastoral counselors) are not bound by this requirement but may, consistent with their ethical and legal obligations, be required to report limited information about incidents without revealing the identities of the individuals involved, to a Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. All members of the Emory community are encouraged to promptly report incidents of sexual harassment and discrimination.

For more information, visit: http://sexualmisconductresources.emory.edu/policies/index.html

Writing Center

The Oxford Writing Center (OWC) mission is to help students grow as flexible communicators and thinkers. The OWC supports students working on all forms of writing – whether for academic,

professional, public, or personal purposes – through individual writing consultations, college-wide workshops, and an on-site library of writing resources. The OWC's peer consultants are trained to support writing, presentations, or multi-modal assignments for any class; they are available at any point in the process, from brainstorming to argument development to polishing. The OWC is located in Pierce Hall 117, and appointments are recommended but not required. For more information, please visit the website at https://inside.oxford.emory.edu/academics/writing-center/index.html

Math Center

Math center helps with MATH 100, 110, 111, 112, and 117Q. For details, students should check the Canvas site of their math class.

Grade Appeals

Handling appeals of grading through the course of the semester is at the discretion of individual faculty members. Here is a suggested system. [N.B. Oxford College does have an official policy for appeal of final grades, as noted in our catalog: https://oxford.emory.edu/catalog/index.html]

To appeal a grade, please wait 48 hours after the items are first returned to the class, in person or electronically. Within the timeframe noted below, please submit via [EMAIL/ CANVAS] the reasons explaining why you believe your grade is incorrect along with the original work in dispute so that the request may be reviewed carefully. Upon review, your grade may remain the same, may increase, or may decrease.

Appeals submitted within the following time frame will be considered: no sooner than 48 hours after the items are returned to the class, and no later than one week after the items are returned. After the timeframe elapses, all grades are final and will not be adjusted. If you do not pick up or review graded work before the timeframe elapses, your eligibility to contest the grade expires.