University of Oregon
Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management

PPPM 407/507: Inequality Policy Solutions
Spring 2024 (CRN 34974/34984, 4 Credit Hours)

~~ DRAFT SYLLABUS ~~

Instructor: Laura Leete
Phone: (541) 346-0834
Email: leete@uoregon.edu

Class meetings: Thurs 4-6:50 pm
Classroom: 248 Gerlinger

Office Hours: by appointment on Zoom (https://uoregon.zoom.us/j/4154354910)

Course Description
The increase in income and wealth inequality in the U.S. since 1980 is often at the forefront of domestic policy discussions. This course examines the nature of economic inequality and the related issue of poverty in the U.S., with comparisons and examples from other countries. In the first part of the term, we examine causes, consequences and trends in inequality and poverty, and the changing relationship with education, race and ethnicity, and gender. We then examine a range of policy solutions including minimum wage, universal basic income, tax policies, education and training, and policies to subsidize food, housing, health care and childcare.

Course Format and Expectations
This class be conducted in a lecture + seminar format and will rely heavily on class discussion and student participation. Students will be expected to come to class having completed assignments and assigned reading and be fully prepared to participate in discussion and learn from one another.

Assignments and Grading for PPPM 407 (Undergraduates)
Grading for undergraduate students will be based on the following components:

- Attendance (10%)
- Weekly reading responses (20%)
- Midterm exam (35%)
- Final exam (35%)
Assignments and Grading for PPPM 507 (Graduate Students)

Grading for graduate students will be based on the following components:

- Attendance (10%)
- Weekly reading responses (20%)
- Midterm exam (25%)
- Final exam (25%)
- Final research paper (20%)

Graduate students will be asked to identify one sub-area or policy related to this class for which they will complete a ~15 page research paper. Prior to writing the paper, graduate students will be asked to turn in a short topic area description and a paper outline for instructor review (not graded). The final paper will be due at the end of the term. Detailed guidelines and the schedule for the paper assignments will be provided early in the term.

Grading and Assignment Policies

- Attendance grading will be based on best 7 out of 9 classes counted.
- Weekly reading responses will ask for responses to a few short questions regarding the reading for an upcoming class meeting. For full credit, reading responses must be completed prior to the relevant class period. Late assignments will be accepted for half-credit for up to one week.
- Exams will be administered online on Canvas during the class period for Week 6 and during the regularly scheduled final exam period.

Course Readings

Assigned readings for the term are listed on the course schedule below. Additional readings of interest (including current news accounts of inequality related policy issues) may be brought in for discussion or added to the reading list over the course of the term.

There are two required books for this class that you should purchase; all other readings will be posted on the class Canvas website or available online. The required books will be available at the UO Duck Store and are also available both new and used from various online book retailers. The current new Amazon price is listed below.

The required books are:

Course Policies

- **Class Attendance**
  Since class participation is included in the final course grade, attendance will be taken at each class meeting. You do not need to inform me if you will not be able to attend class. However, it is suggested that you get notes from a classmate for any class sessions that you miss.

- **Office Hours**
  Office hours are on Zoom by appointment. Please contact me by email to schedule an appointment. All Zoom meetings will be at this Zoom address: 
  https://uoregon.zoom.us/j/4154354910

- **Email**
  Email is the most reliable way to reach me outside of class and office hours. I will try my best to get back to you as soon as possible.

- **Incomplete Policy**
  Students are expected to turn in all materials at the designated time. In accordance with university regulations, a grade of ‘Incomplete’ will only be given when “the quality of work is satisfactory but a minor yet essential requirement of the course has not been completed for reasons acceptable to the instructor.” My interpretation of “minor” is less than or equal to 30%.

- **Accessibility**
  Students who have a documented accessibility issues and anticipate needing accommodations in this course should make arrangements to discuss with the instructor as soon as possible. They should also request that their Access Advisor or the Accessible Education Center verify their request.

- **Professional Practice**
  All degree programs in PPPM are pre-professional programs. As such, students are expected to behave in a professional manner at all times and to treat each other and the instructor with the professional courtesy and respect expected in a workplace. Similarly, all communications relating to this course and all work turned in for this course should reflect professional standards with attention to presentation, formatting, spelling and so on.

- **Academic Honesty and Plagiarism**
  It is expected that each student will maintain the highest standard of academic honesty and conduct with regard to their work in this course. All work (including exams and assignments) submitted should reflect the efforts of the submitting student alone. Students who violate this
policy will receive a grade of zero for the assignment in question.

**COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING LIST**

**Week 1 – Introduction to Inequality, Concepts and Measurement**

- Dadush et al., Chapters 1 and 2.
- Atkinson, Chapters 1 and 2.
- Peterson Institute for International Economics “How to Fix Economic Inequality”, Section 1.

**Week 2 -- Does Inequality Matter?**

- Dadush et al., Chapter 3.
- Peterson Institute for International Economics “How to Fix Economic Inequality”, Section 3.
- Frank, R., “Chapter 3-Inequality, Happiness and Health” from *Falling Behind: How Rising Inequality Harms the Middle Class* (2nd Edition; Aaron Wildavsky Forum for Public Policy, Volume 4 ), University of California Press, 2013.

**Week 3 – How Much Economic Mobility Is There?**

- Pew Charitable Trusts (2012). *Pursuing the American Dream*.

**Week 4 - Gender, Race and Ethnicity and Inequality**


Week 5 Causes of Inequality – Part 1

Overview
• Peterson Institute for International Economics “What Causes Inequality”, Section 2.
• Dadush et al., Chapter 4.
• Atkinson, Chapter 3.

Education
• Dynarski, S. (2016) “Why American schools are even more unequal than we thought”. NYTimes Upshot (2 pages) http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/14/upshot/why---american---schools---are---even---more---unequal---than---we---thought.html

Labor Markets

Week 6 – Midterm Exam
Week 7 – Causes of Inequality – Part 2

Market Structures


Intergenerational Transfers


Week 7 through 10 – Policy Approaches to Reducing Inequality

Overview

- Peterson Institute for International Economics “How to Fix Economic Inequality”, Sections 6, 7 and 8.
- Dadush et al., Chapter 5.

Returns to Labor and Capital

- Atkinson, Chapters 5-6.
Minimum Wage and Social Safety Nets


Education and Training Policy


Taxation and Social Insurance, Wealth Accumulation Strategies

- Atkinson, Chapters 7-8.

Finals Week: Final Exam 12:30-2:30 p.m., Monday, June 10th