

## **ECON 348: POLITICAL ECONOMY OF WOMEN (GENDER & SEXUALITY)**

**Fall 2011**

MWF 11:15 – 12:05, Machmer W-24

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### **A. Course Overview**

This course uses a political economy approach to examine economics and economic policy-making from the perspective of women and more broadly, from the perspective of gender. The political economy framework used in this course emerges from the premise that economic life has material, cultural and political aspects and that aspects of an individual's (or group's) identity – gender, race, class and /or sexuality – may constrain or empower agents in their participation in economic life. In this sense, a (feminist) political economy of women/gender approach requires us to think critically about

- (a) how women may face different constraints in economic life – i.e. greater inequalities in the distribution of resources and opportunities – than men,
- (b) how women have been represented (or not represented) in economic theorizing, and
- (c) how both of the above are ultimately tied to socially constructed and/or historically contingent ideas of what it means to be a woman or a man, what constitutes work, and what the economy consists of.

In this process of thinking critically, we challenge conventional understandings and prevailing dominant narratives of gender/gender relations in economic theory and models of economic behavior. We see how gendered assumptions permeate economic theorizing about the household, about labor markets, about productive and reproductive work, *and* with respect to policy-making, systematically producing unequal opportunities and outcomes by gender.

The methods used in the course are diverse, ranging from statistical and graphical summaries of economic and social indicators, ethnographic descriptions of work in offices, factories, other sites of wage labor and households, historical accounts of development and transformation of the labor force in the US and the developing world, and occasionally, econometric models underlying policy-making. We will also adopt an intersectional approach to the topic, examining gender and sexuality not in isolation, but in conjunction with other axes of difference such as class, race, caste, ethnicity, or location.

This course is appropriate for economics majors, for students of other social sciences with some background in economics, and for women's studies majors with a focus on social science.

### **B. Course Objectives**

1. To understand the theoretical debates surrounding the construction of gender and gender relations in the discipline of economics.
2. To critically examine the consequences of these gendered assumptions.
3. To study some of the classic papers and empirical literature on the continued marginalization of women's lives and women's work in various sectors of the US and the global economy, and on

the interaction of gender and sexuality with class, caste, ethnicity and race to produce specific contexts of oppression.

4. To look into the emergence of conceptual frameworks proposed that integrate women/gender/sexuality into economic models and arguments.
5. To make connections between theory and practice and think about alternative visions and initiatives for engendering economics.

### C. Pre-requisites

I welcome all majors to this class; interdisciplinary perspectives always make class interaction interesting. However, this is an upper-level economics course based on critique, and some of the material assumes a prior knowledge of basic micro- and macro economic models and their assumptions. I will provide a background where needed, though you may have to do some basic reading on your own if you are not an economics major (and in some cases, even if you are). It is recommended that you have taken 100-level economics courses previously (micro and macro). If you have not done so and still wish to take the class, please stop by and have a chat with me, or contact me via email.

### D. Course Materials

*There is no textbook for this course.* Readings are a collection of papers and book chapters. All readings are available either from the library's online collection (LIB), or on the course website (CW). Most journal articles are available on both, as mentioned in the syllabus. A link is provided in the case of readings available on other websites.

### E. Attendance and Expectations

\* Attendance is *required*. Two excused absences, for valid reasons, will be allowed in the course of this session. Any additional absences will be considered unexcused (regardless of reason) and will affect class participation grade. This is really not out of a desire to be unreasonable; *the course is structured in a way that emphasizes participation and discussion*. Indeed, this element constitutes a significant percentage of the grade. So, come to class. Really!

\* I may or may not take attendance in every class. That is, *attendance recording will be randomized*. If you are absent for a particular class (and it is your third time being absent) and that happens to be a class in which I take attendance, I will deduct points regardless of what the reason for your absence is, or how sincere you have been with your work otherwise. It *will* affect your grade, and I will not hear any justifications *post-facto*.

\* Physical presence in class is one thing, mental presence is another – both are required. Please be respectful to your colleagues by *coming to class prepared* to engage in discussions, i.e. having read the material assigned. While in class, please be attentive. Emails, the news, Facebook, text messages, work for other classes etc. can wait 50 minutes. I also ask that you not use laptop computers in class.

\*Most crucially, some sensitive topics will be under discussion and many of us will have strong feelings and opinions. However, just as I am expected to behave respectfully towards you, I expect that you will *offer opinions in a manner that is sensitive and respectful* of your peers and me.

## F. Requirements

The course follows a ‘continuous assessment’ pattern. The following are the components of this continuous assessment.

(i) *Attendance (10% or 100 points)*

See section E above.

(ii) *Class Participation (20% or 200 points)*

Everyone is expected to come to class ready to discuss the assigned readings. It is impossible to discuss if you have not read! In order to receive full participation credit (i.e. the full 200 points), you must raise questions or make significant comments in at least 5 or more class sessions. Try to enjoy this part, for this is what will make learning possible. If you have thoughts or contributions to make before or after a discussion, feel free to email them to me.

(iii) *Leading Class Discussion on an Article (10% or 100 points)*

You will be expected to sign up to send discussion questions on one article in the course of this semester. There is a sign up sheet for this. For the article you sign up for, you must send me around 4 thoughtful questions by the previous night (10 pm hard deadline) via email. I will integrate these questions into my discussion. You will also lead discussion on the article on the day of class. While writing your questions, think about the main points of the reading, link it to other readings and the course theme in general, and/or raise relevant and interesting critiques. You should aim to generate discussion in class about the reading through your questions.

(iv) *Pop Quizzes and Short Homework Responses (20% or 200 points)*

The actual number of pop quizzes will be based on the need for them as determined by your effort and preparation for the class discussions. Response papers – a few paragraphs long – may be assigned as homework on specific readings/movies, also for preparation purposes. They can be handwritten or typed up but have to be clear and legible! The total points will be divided equally among the number of pop quizzes/response papers that happen over the semester.

(v) *Take-Home Exams (20% each, total 40%, or each worth 200 points)*

In lieu of a midterm and final, you will have *two take-home exams* in the course of the semester. These will consist of 5-6 questions to be answered in 2-3 page short essays, going to a minimum of 15 pages each (double-spaced, one-inch margins, 12-point Times New Roman font). These papers must be typed up and submitted in class on the due dates. Since plenty of time will be given for these papers, *late submissions will be penalized* by half a grade for each day late. Please be careful to note the submission dates for the short assignments and the final paper. You will receive a point score out of 200 for each assignment.

There is *no official final exam*, except for the assignments and other requirements above. However, since pop quizzes, attendance and participation are significant in terms of points, anything you miss is entirely your loss. The plus side of this is that you will be free to focus on other end of semester exams.

## G. Grading

Your final score will be out of 1000 points (see section F), and then converted to a percentage. Letter grades will be assigned after the course ends according to the following scale.

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
Percentage	>93	89-92	85-88	81-84	77-80	73-76	69-72	64-68	60-63	56-59	51-55	51>

## H. Academic Conduct

\*Links to university policy on conduct and academic matters:

[http://www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/codeofconduct/](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/) (for general conduct with a link to university policy on academic honesty, and

<http://www.umass.edu/registrar/media/academicregs.pdf> (for academic regulations)

\* *Each student must submit her or his own work.* Students submitting identical or substantively identical papers will not get any credit for assignments/quizzes etc.

\* *Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and carries severe penalties.* Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another – including material that is available online – as one’s own work. If you directly use material (quotes, borrowing ideas) from another author’s work, you *must* specify sources clearly and provide complete citations. Please see

<http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/geninfo/plagiarism.html> for more information.

## I. Topics, Readings and Schedule

\* Readings may be added or deleted to this schedule throughout the course depending on our needs. Readings may also be moved around or changed over the course of the semester for a more flexible class schedule.

### **Section I: Introduction to Gender and Political Economy: Why Study Gender in Economics?**

**What is Feminist Political Economy?** (September 7, 9, 12, 14, 16, 19 and 21)

Sep 7 (Wed): Introduction to each other, to the course, and to the syllabus.

Sep 9 (Fri): (Political Economy)

\* Sackrey, Schneider and Knoedler, ‘The Political Economy Challenge to Mainstream Economics,’ Introduction to Political Economy, Dollars and Sense. (CW)

Sep 12 (Mon): (Feminist Perspectives)

\* Walby, S. Introduction in *Theorizing Patriarchy*, p. 1 – 24. (CW)

Sep 14 (Wed): (Social Construction of Gender)

\* Homework: Movie – *Tough Guise*

Available at: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-9632437500432634>

\* Movie Screening in Class – *Killing Us Softly 3* (34 mins)

Sep 16 (Fri): (The Basis of a Feminist Economics)

\* Ferber, M. and J. Nelson, ‘Introduction: The Social Construction of Economics and the Social Construction of Gender,’ from Ferber and Nelson (eds.) *Beyond Economic Man*, p. 1-14. (CW)

\* Discussion on the Movies and on Ferber and Nelson article.

***[NB: Add/Drop period ends Sep 19, Monday]***

Sep 19 (Mon), 21 (Wed) and 23 (Fri): (Feminist Economics' Critiques of Mainstream Economics and Challenges)

- \* Nelson, J., 'The Study of Choice or the Study of Provisioning? Gender and the Definition of Economics,' from Ferber and Nelson (eds.) *Beyond Economic Man*, p. 23 -36. (CW)
- \* England, P., 'The Separative Self: Androcentric Bias in Neoclassical Assumptions,' from Ferber and Nelson (eds.) *Beyond Economic Man*, p. 37 – 53. (CW)
- \* Strober, M. (1994), 'Rethinking Economics through a Feminist Lens,' *American Economic Review*, Vol. 84, No. 2, p. 143-147 (CW and LIB)
- \* MacDonald, M. (1995), 'Feminist Economics: From Theory to Research,' *The Canadian Journal of Economics*, Vol. 28, No. 1 p. 159 – 176 (CW and LIB)

***Section II: Patriarchy and Capital Accumulation*** (Sep 26, 28, 30, Oct 3, 5, 7, 11)

(Global historical accounts of the gendered division of labor and the ways in which patriarchy has operated to disadvantage women)

- \* Mies, M. 'Social Origins of the Sexual Division of Labor,' Chapter 2 from *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, p. 44-71 (CW)
- \* Federici, S. Selections from *Caliban and the Witch* (CW)
  - Accumulation of Labor and the Degradation of Women. P. 61-115.
  - The Great Witch-Hunt in Europe. P. 163-206.

***Section III: A Closer Look at the Household/ Family*** (Oct 12, 14 17, 19, 21, 24, 26 and 28)

(Examining prevalent assumptions regarding the nature of the household in mainstream economic theory – the altruistic head of household, the household as a unified economic unit, the heteronormative household, household as the site of reproductive labor – and their consequences)

Oct 12 (Wed)

- \* Becker, G. S. (1981), Selections from *Treatise on the Family*, (CW)
  - Division of Labor in Households and Families, p.30-53 (do not focus on the math if it is too difficult; rather, pay attention to the ideas)
  - Human Capital and Effort, p.74-79

Oct 14 (Fri) and 17 (Mon): (critiquing the household as a unified economic unit)

- \* Ferber, M. and B. Birnbaum (1977), 'The "New Home Economics:" Retrospects and Prospects,' *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Jun., 1977), p. 19-28. (LIB)
- \* Koopman, J. (1991), 'Neoclassical Household Models and Modes of Household Production: Problems in the Analysis of African Agricultural Households,' *Review of Radical Political Economics*, Vol.23, Nos. 3 & 4, p. 148 – 173. (CW and LIB)

***[NB: Submission deadline for Take-Home Exam 1 is in class on Oct 17, Monday]***

Oct 19 (Wed): (critiquing the heteronormative household)

- \* Danby, C. (2007), 'Political Economy and the Closet: Heteronormativity in Feminist Economics,' *Feminist Economics*, Vol. 13, No.2, p. 29 – 53. (CW and LIB)

***[NB: Last day to drop with a W]***

Oct 21 (Fri), 24 (Mon), 26 (Wed), and 28 (Fri): (the household and reproductive/unpaid labor)

\* Hartmann, H. (1981), 'The Family as a Locus of Gender, Class and Political Struggle,' *Signs*, Vol. 6, No. 3, p. 366-394. (CW and LIB)

\* Folbre, N. (2001), Selections from *Invisible Heart*, p. 1- 82. (CW)

- Introduction and Section 1. The Economics of Care
- Chapter 1: The Milk of Human Kindness.
- Chapter 2: The Care Penalty.
- Chapter 3: Measuring Success.

\* Bergmann, B. (1981), 'The Economic Risks of Being a Housewife,' *American Economic Review*, Vol. 71, No. 2, p. 81 – 86 (math parts not essential) (CW and LIB).

**Section IV: Women, Gender and Labor Market Processes** (Oct 31, Nov 2, 4, 7, 9, 14, 16)

[NB: No class Nov 11, Veterans' Day] (Examining the wage gap, gender segregation of the labor market, women's labor market participation, gender discrimination, women in the global economy]

Oct 31 (Mon): (wage gap)

\* Treiman and Hartmann (1981), 'Evidence Regarding Wage Differentials,' Chapter 2 in *Women, Work and Wages: Equal Pay for Jobs of Equal Value*, p. 13-42. (CW and LIB)

Nov 2 (Wed): (explaining wage gap – occupational sex segregation)

\* Blau, F. and C. Jusenius (1976), 'Economists' Approaches to Sex Segregation in the Labor Market: An Appraisal,' *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 3, Women and the Workplace: The Implications of Occupational Segregation, p. 181-199. (CW and LIB)

Nov 4 (Fri), 7 (Mon) and 9 (Wed): (gender discrimination in the labor market)

\* Shulman, S. (2003), 'The Political Economy of Labor Market Discrimination: a Classroom-Friendly Presentation of the Theory,' in Mutari and Figart (eds.) *Women and the Economy*, Ch. 17, p. 207 – 220. (CW)

\* King, M. (2003), 'Black Women's Breakthrough into Clerical Work: An Occupational Tipping Model,' in Mutari and Figart (eds.) *Women and the Economy*, Ch. 18, p. 221 – 233. (CW)

\* Figart, D. (2003), 'Gender as More than a Dummy Variable: Feminist Approaches to Discrimination,' in Mutari and Figart (eds.) *Women and the Economy*, Ch. 19, p. 234 – 247. (CW)

\* Tolich, M. and C. Briar (2003), 'Just Checking it Out, Exploring the Significance of Informal Gender Divisions Among American Supermarket Employees,' in Mutari and Figart (eds.) *Women and the Economy*, Ch. 20, p. 248 – 256. (CW)

Nov 14 (Mon): (women in the global economy)

\* Movie Screening – Global Assembly Line (58 mins) – the movie runs 8 minutes more than class time, so please bear with me for this day. (You can leave when the class time ends if you have to be somewhere)

Nov 16 (Wed):

\* Lim (1983), 'Capitalism, Imperialism and Patriarchy: the Dilemma of Third-World Women Workers in Multinational Factories,' in *Women, Men and the International Division of Labor* (Nash and Fernandez-Kelly eds.), p. 70-91. (CW)

\* Discussion on Movie and article.

**Section V: Policy Issues Relating to Women, Gender and Sexuality** (Nov 18, 21, 23, 28, 30)  
(Assessing the omissions and commissions in policies relating to single mothers, minimum wage, care work, aging, taxation)

Nov 18 (Fri):

\*Albeda, R. and C. Tilly (2003), ‘Single with Children: The Economic Plight of Single Mothers,’ in Mutari and Figart (eds.) *Women and the Economy*, Ch. 21, p. 265 – 272. (CW)

\* Applebaum, E. *et. al.* (2004), The Minimum Wage and Working Women, Economic Policy Institute Brief. (CW) Also available at: [http://epi.3cdn.net/c777bfcd12a8f67a7f\\_xgm6bht8z.pdf](http://epi.3cdn.net/c777bfcd12a8f67a7f_xgm6bht8z.pdf)

Nov 21 (Mon):

\* Watch ‘Motherhood Manifesto’ in class – movie runs 57 minutes. (You can leave at the end of class time if you have to)

Nov 23 (Wed):

\* England, P. and N. Folbre, ‘Care, Inequality and Policy,’ in *Child Care and Inequality: Rethinking Carework for Children and Youth* (Cancian *et. al.* eds.), p. 133 – 144. (CW)

\* Discussion on movie and the above article

***[NB: Take-Home Exam 2 submission deadline is in class on Nov. 23, Wednesday. But no, the course is not over yet! ☺]***

Nov 28 (Mon):

\* Eaton, S. (2005), ‘Eldercare in the United States: Inadequate, Inequitable but not a Lost Cause,’ *Feminist Economics* Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 37 – 51. (CW and LIB)

Nov 30 (Wed):

\* Lind, A. (2004) ‘Legislating the Family: Heterosexist Bias in Social Welfare Policy Frameworks,’ *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, Vol. 31, No. 4, p. 21- 35. (CW and LIB)

**Section VI: Women and Gender in Developing Contexts** (Dec 2, 5, 7, 9)

(Discussing a variety of topics pertaining to women in the global division of labor, and the implications of the population debate for women, and women’s access to credit)

\* Watch movie – Mardi Gras: Made in China

\* Discussion on movie

\* Hartmann, B. (1995), “Introduction”, “Security and Survival”, “The Malthusian Orthodoxy”, “A Womb of One’s Own,” “The Plan Behind Family Planning” and “The Light at the End of the Demographic Tunnel” in *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs*, Second Edition, South End Press, p. Xv-xxi, p. 3 – 72 and p. 289-303. (CW)

\* Goetz, A. M. and R. Sen Gupta (1996) (reprinted 2003), ‘Who Takes the Credit? Gender, Power, and Control over Loan Use in Rural Credit Programs in Bangladesh,’ *World Development*, Vol. 24, No. 1, p. 45 – 63 (CW and LIB) (pending time)