Discrimination, Gender, and the Economy

Course Description: This course analyzes the experiences of minorities and women in the economy using both traditional and non-traditional methodologies. It attempts to extend the traditional interpretation of economic issues to the unique experiences of these groups.

Prerequisites: This course requires the student to have passed an introductory course in Economics. We will be making use of the tools that are developed in these courses (General Economics or Principles), so it is essential that the student be comfortable with that material.

Course Format: The early class material will concentrate primarily on tools and methodologies, and as such, will be primarily lecture. As we approach the rest of the material, the course will become more like a seminar with student input. I fully expect students to be prepared with the material and able to answer questions about the reading. Even though I fully understand the need for today’s student to multi-task, I will not allow students to use laptop computers during class (unless there are special needs, such as a disability, that need to be accommodated).

Readings: The main text is The Economics of Women, Men, and Work 6th edition, by Blau, Ferber, and Winkler (ISBN-10-0-13-608425-7 Pearson Press). This text is abbreviated TEXT in the reading list that follows. The secondary text is available to you free on D2L and it is Economics of the Everyday: Gender and the US Economy, (referred to as Burnett in the reading list) This is my own book in the manuscript stage on D2L at https://uwosh.courses.wisconsin.edu/. These chapters are still in the draft stage, so any comments are welcome. Other readings are available on D2L as noted below. Occasionally, additional readings from outside sources or handouts may be assigned as well.

Requirements: The course grade will be based points as allocated below:
midterm 100 points (Thursday, March 15)
I Spy project 50 points
final 100 points (Thursday, May 10)
Grading Scale:

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* Also, note that the grades are curved so that there may be some adjustments to the curve various assignments. Any such adjustments will be announced.

Exams for this course will be primarily essay, with some graphical manipulation required, and possibly some very light algebra. The final will be comprehensive, though it will concentrate on the topics covered after the midterm.

The *I Spy project* for this course consists of 5 submissions of an ongoing *I Spy* journal, with 10 points per submission. The first *I spy* write up is to be turned in to me on Feb. 19 (with successive *I Spys due on Feb 23, March 8, March 29, and April 12*). You are responsible for these dates, as they may, or may not, be mentioned in class. *I will return each graded submission to you and you will need to pick them up from me within one and a half weeks of submission, if you fail to do so, points will be deducted from the next I spy you submit to me. You must keep all I Spys together - with each new addition stapled to the top of the preceding submissions, failing to turn in all your I spy’s together will result in a reduction of points. Old I Spys turned in with the new ones must be the graded copy, not newly printed out copies of the old I Spys.* If you get 3 full credit I Spys, you are excused from turning in the remaining I Spys and you will receive full credit for those remaining I Spys. You may refer to me for questions on this policy. Also, please note that you may do only one I Spy dealing with television or the movies.
I Spy Sexism Assignment Instructions

Step One: Take Note

The first step is to sit up and take notice of what's going on around you. Look for evidence of institutionalized sexism, racism, homophobia and ageism. If you can't think of a topic, consider the following questions and really look at the society around you.

- How many women or minorities do you see in official capacities around your university?
- How many of the elected officials in your city are women or minorities? State? Federal?
- How many women or minorities serve as judges in your local judicial system? State? Federal?
- How many women artists are covered in your art history classes? How are women mentioned in other history classes?
- How many local school principals (or chancellors or presidents) are women or minorities? How many are men? Compare that to the teacher female/male or white/minority ratio.
- Are men and women charged different prices for the same goods or services? How are the goods or services distinguished so that a different price is charged?
- In your favorite general-interest magazines, how many articles are written by women? What is the nature of these articles relative to the nature of the articles written by men? How many articles are about women? Of those articles about women, how many of them are about important issues and how many are about stereotypical issues (Lose weight now! How to thrill your mate in bed!)?
- Thinking about television, think about how women, men and/or minorities are portrayed – NOT about the plot but about how we are supposed to feel about certain types (Are the gay men portrayed as ‘normal’ humans or something entirely different? Are the Latinos portrayed as caricatures? Are all the fat women supposed to be ‘jolly’? Do the men all appear stupid?) You may ONLY do one I spy dealing with television or movies, the second on that topic will receive a 0.

These are just a few of the ways that sexism, racism, and homophobia are institutionalized in the world around us. No doubt, you can think of dozens more. In order to make change, we have to identify these practices and let it be known that we think it's wrong. So keep your eyes peeled. Carry a notebook and jot down incidents that strike you as unfair. When you pick an incident to write up, make sure it is current, NOT something that happened in a bar (people being drunk and stupid), NOT something over the internet (flaming and the like), and something that can be ‘reported’ in such a way that you could, possibly, make a difference. In other words, something that you could write a letter about – not a ‘one time thing’.
Step Two: Write Up

Once you recognize unfair behavior for what it is, put your notes and experiences in the form of a one to two page class “write up”. This write up should be MORE than just one or two paragraphs, a full page up to two pages (double spaced) is appropriate. I DO NOT want to hear about behavior in the local bars. I DO NOT want to hear about how one person treats their dates. I DO NOT want to hear about internet (or other) trash talk. I want to hear about something that you truly believe can be traced to institutional attitudes toward race, gender, age, sexual orientation, etc. I want to hear about something that you, personally, witness, NOT something that happened to someone else years ago. Furthermore, it should be something that YOU might be able to affect in some way (however small), therefore think in terms of who you could write to that might have some effect on the situation.

Pick one experience from those you have noticed in each two week period and summarize that event/experience; don’t make one up - there are enough going on around you that you shouldn’t have to pretend. Make sure that the experience upon which you are commenting is actually one that demonstrates racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia (etc.), rather than just an example of someone being mean or unfair to a particular individual or when there is a demonstrable economic rationale for the behavior (for example, it is NOT discrimination for an insurance company to charge young men more for insurance – that is simply recovering costs from a high risk pool of customers while it IS sexism to have a car salesman speak only to the male of a couple when the WOMAN is the one who is purchasing the car). Then explain why you think what you observed was wrong or unfair (who is hurt by this action?). Finally, in a concluding paragraph, propose WHAT YOU COULD HAVE DONE as a partial solution to the problem. This action has to be something YOU could actually do – NOT “educate the world” or “create a government agency.” Usually, think of who you could write a letter to (the offender’s boss? the store’s regional manager? the Advance Titan letter to the editor?). Note that I am not asking you to take action – just to think about how you might take action if you choose to do so. These assignments are due periodically over the course of the semester. You may ONLY do one I spy dealing with television or movies, the second on that topic will receive a 0.

Step Three: Keep the Campaign Alive (optional)

The next step, should you wish to pursue any of the incidents you witnessed, is to let your feelings be known in an effective way. You can send a brief letter or note that will help you get the word out: Try something like the following:

I spied Sexism/Homophobia/Racism

Dear ____________________,
I am writing to alert you that on ______ (date), in _____________ (city and state), I witnessed the following unacceptable behavior: __________________________________________.
I strongly object to your taking part in, condoning, or ignoring such activity. I am notifying members of the media, elected officials and my family and friends that a problem exits. I hope you will work to correct it.
Thank You,
1. First and most important, send a card to the wrongdoer. Let him or her or them know that you are watching and that you will continue to watch until the situation changes.

2. Send a card to a member of the media (newspapers, TV news programs, magazines, web sites). You can write a brief letter to the editor of the Oshkosh Northwestern or an article for the Advanced Titan. There are lots of open channels you can use to get your message to people who share your views and want to help you make change.

3. Send a card to your elected officials (the Chancellor/Deans, your Senator, the President of the United States, members of the school board, or members of your town council). Their job is to listen to your concerns and act on them. If they don't respond to one postcard, get others to send more.

4. And finally, send a card or discuss the matter with family or friends. Although you may not talk much about it, you'll be amazed to find that people close to you often have the same concerns about unjust activities in your community. By sending them word of your own work in writing you will encourage and inspire them to take actions of their own.

~Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have.

*Margaret Mead*
Reading List

Note: I do not expect you to replicate any numbers or equations you find in the reading. Read for content and general ideas. Evaluate your reading on its persuasiveness, not on its level of intricacy.

Part I: Introduction

A. Methodology

Burnett, Ch. 0 (Preface) (D2L)

Burnett, Ch. 1 (D2L)

B. Historical Perspectives

Burnett, Ch. 2 (D2L)

History of Slavery (in class power point)

Read the sections (click on the boxes outlined in red at the bottom of the frame to find the sections, you want sections 2,3,4,5) “Africa: The Long March”, “The Transatlantic Slave Trade” “Slave Labor and Slave Systems” and “The Struggle Against Slavery and Abolition” of the web site “Lest we forget: The Triumph over Slavery” at http://digital.nypl.org/lwf/english/site/flash.html

C. Labor Force Participation

TEXT, Ch. 3 and 4

D. Wage Determination

TEXT, Ch. 5-9

“It is Still a Pink and Blue World” (D2L)

E. Comparable Worth

Burnett, Ch. 14 (D2L)
**Part II: Advanced Topics**

A. Family, Culture, and Work

   TEXT, Ch. 10

   Becker Article *(Read pp. 395-402, ONLY)*. (D2L).

   Bergmann Article (D2L).

B. Education

   “Discrimination Against Women and Girls in Education” (D2L)

   “Title IX and Women’s Athletic Opportunity” (D2L)

   “Academics and Women” (D2L)

   “Babies and Academics” (D2L)

C. Health

   Burnett, Ch. 9 (D2L)

   Dirie Article (D2L)

D. Women of Color

   Burnett, Ch. 11 (D2L)

   “At the Intersection of Race and Gender” (D2L)

   “Welfare Reform” (D2L)

   “Women of Color and Social Security” (D2L)

E. Women and the Law

   Burnett, Ch. 12 (D2L)

F. Race and the Legal System

   Peffley Article *[Read pages 30-33 AND pages 21-27 ONLY]* (D2L)

   Phillips and Votey Article (D2L)
G. Race and Gender in the Business World
Burnett, Ch. 13 (D2L)

**Part III: Conclusions and Beginnings**

H. Policies and Scenarios for the Future
TEXT, Ch. 11