

# The University of Oklahoma

## College of Continuing Education

### Advanced Programs – Course Syllabus

#### Course Title:

Special Studies: Poverty, Income Inequality, and Public Policy

#### Course Number:

ECON 5990-101

#### Course Description:

The increase in income inequality and the concentration of wealth among the top 1% of the U.S. population is currently a debatable issue among economists, social scientists, and policy makers. The objective of this course is to show how structural issues in the labor market are contributing to the growing income inequality in this country. We will address the impact of globalization and off shoring of jobs on rising unemployment in the labor market. The economic, social, and psychological impact of displaced workers who are facing long- term unemployment and underemployment will be analyzed. The impact of technological innovations and the rising importance of technical skills along with the stratification of workers by skills attainment are contributing to wage inequality in the labor market. The growing number of disconnected youth, young people who neither work nor go to college, is a perfect example of the malfunctioning of labor market institutions and the educational system in the U.S. The educational system and the importance of socioeconomic background that are contributing to the differential skills attainment will also be discussed.

In order to understand the stratification of workers by wages, the course will also address the growing disparity in pay among the lowest paid workers and executives in this country as companies enjoy record profits. Additional topics to be discussed in the context of wage inequality will include the decline of unions, the inability of minimum wages to keep up with the pace of inflation, and the decline of the middle class due to offshoring of semi-skilled jobs. Ultimately, students should emerge from the course with a more thorough understanding of inequality's roots in the underlying structure of the labor market.

I will teach in a lecture and discussion format. **Major emphasis will be placed on classroom discussions and student participation.**

#### Class Dates, Location and Hours:

Dates: May 5-7 & 12-14, 2017

Location: OCCE, Norman, Oklahoma. Classes are held at the Thurman White Forum Building of OCCE, 1704 Asp Avenue.

Hours: Friday 5:30-9:30 p.m.; Saturday 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Sunday 1:00-5:00 p.m.

Last day to enroll or drop without penalty: April 6, 2017

#### Site Director:

Email: [apnorman@ou.edu](mailto:apnorman@ou.edu). Phone: 405-325-3333.

#### Professor Contact Information:

Course Professor: Dr. Aparna Mitra

Mailing Address: OU Economics Department  
308 Cate Center Drive, 321 Cate 1  
Norman, OK 73019

Telephone Number: 405-325-5859

E-mail Address: [amitra@ou.edu](mailto:amitra@ou.edu)

Professor availability: The professor will be available via e-mail to students before and after the class sessions. On-site office hours are half an hour before and after each class session, by appointment.

## Textbook(s) and Instructional Materials:

Student materials are available at the OU Follett Bookstore located at 1185 Asp Avenue; Norman, OK, and can be ordered online, by phone, by email, or by fax. Ordering online at <http://www.bkstr.com/oklahomastore/home> is strongly recommended – students can track the status of their order within 48 hours. If an order has not been shipped within three days, students can contact the Follett textbook manager by phone (405) 325-3511, (800) 522-0772 (toll-free) or email [0831mgr@fheg.follett.com](mailto:0831mgr@fheg.follett.com). Phone orders (ask for the textbook manager and identify yourself as an Advanced Programs student) can be placed 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday; 10 a.m. to 4p.m. on Saturday (CST). Summer hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday (CST). Fax orders can be placed 24 hours a day at (405) 325-7770. Text prices are available online.

1. Greenhouse, S. (2009). *The big squeeze*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf . ISBN 9781400096527.
2. Stiglitz, J. (2012). *The price of inequality*. New York: W.W. Norton . ISBN 9780393345063.
3. Putnam, R. (2015). *Our kids: The American dream in crisis*. New York: Simon & Schuster. ISBN 9781476769905.
4. Foroohar, R. (2016). *Makers and takers: The rise of finance and the fall of the American business*. New York: Crown Publishing. ISBN 9780553447231.
5. Edin, K. & Shaefer, H.L.S. (2015). *\$2.00 a day: Living on almost nothing in America*. New York: Harcourt. ISBN 9780544303188.
6. Kozol, J. (2012). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York: Random House. ISBN 9780770435684.
7. Materials posted on the OU Canvas learning management system: Additional readings will be posted several weeks before class starts. Access Canvas at <https://oklahoma.instructure.com/>, enter your OU NetID and password, and select course to access material. Please contact your local Site Director if you require assistance.

**Note:** Follett is the Advanced Programs contractual textbook provider. Should text changes become necessary after publication of the course syllabus, Advanced Programs will facilitate text returns/refunds only for texts purchased through Follett.

## Course Objectives:

At the end of the course, students are expected to have a thorough understanding of the multidimensional nature of poverty and the complexity of formulating appropriate policies geared towards the reduction of poverty.

## Course Outline:

This course is not technical but requires extensive reading and writing, therefore it is imperative that you do your readings prior to class. Major emphasis will be placed on discussions, research, and classroom debates. Please consult the following websites frequently to contribute to meaningful discussions in class.

U.S. Census Bureau: <http://www.census.gov>

National Center for Education Statistics: <https://nces.ed.gov>

National Poverty Center, University of Michigan: [http://npc.umich.edu/about\\_us/](http://npc.umich.edu/about_us/)

Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison: <http://www.irp.wisc.edu/>

**Please complete all readings prior to each class period**

## Session I

- **Introduction to the Course**
- Current statistics on Poverty and Income Inequality - lecture
- Definition and Measurement of Poverty - lecture
- Read “The Price of Inequality,” chapters 1, 4

Read “Our kids,” chapter 1

## Session II

- **Demographics of the Poor** – Read “\$2 A Day,” chapters 1, 3, 4
- **Rent Seeking, Financialization, and Inequality** – Read “The Price of Inequality,” chs 2, 3, 5; “Makers and Takers,” Introduction, chs 1, 2
- **Child Poverty and Intergenerational Mobility in the U.S.** – Readings will be posted on Canvas
- **Families, Parenting Styles and Poverty** – Read “Our Kids,” chs 2, 3, 5

## Session III

- **Human Capital, Employment, and Earnings**
- Lecture
- Read Savage Inequalities, chapters 1-3
- Additional Readings will be posted on Canvas

## Session IV

- **3 Views of the Labor Market** – lecture
- **The Secondary Labor Market** – lecture
- Read “The Big Squeeze,” chs 1, 2, 4
- Read Nickel and Dimed, chapters 1-3, and Evaluation
- **The Role of Corporations and CEO Compensation in the US** – Read “The Big Squeeze,” chs 8, 9

## Session V

- **Automation and Jobs**
- **Globalization, Free Trade, Off-shoring**
- Read “The Big Squeeze,” chs 6, 11
- **Immigration** – lecture
- **Unions and Inequality** – lecture
- **Policy**
- Read “Makers and Takers,” chs 9, 11
- Read “\$2 A Day,” Conclusion
- Read “The Big Squeeze,” ch 16
- **Short Class Presentations (about 10 minutes each) on any of the above topics**

## Session VI

Review and Final Examination (please bring some paper and a stapler with you to class)

### Assignments, Grading and Due Dates:

1. Final Examination –50% - last day of class
2. Class Presentations – 10%
3. Class Discussion and short presentation– 10%  
Students are expected to discuss relevant readings and articles
4. Post-seminar assignment – 30% due two weeks after last day of class, **May 28, 2017**

The post seminar assignment involves writing a structured term paper (15 or > pages) on any issue/s related to poverty in the U.S. or across the world. The paper should be divided into different sections such as, Introduction, Background, Analysis, and Conclusion along with a bibliography. The required structure of the paper will be posted on Canvas and details will be discussed in class.

### Grading:

This is a letter-graded course: A, B, C, D, or F.

**Notice:** Failure to meet assignment due dates could result in a grade of I (Incomplete) and may adversely impact Tuition Assistance and/or Financial Aid.

## **POLICIES AND NOTICES**

### **Attendance/Grade Policy**

Attendance and participation in interaction, individual assignments, group exercises, simulations, role playing, etc. are valuable aspects of any course because much of the learning comes from discussions in class with other students. It is expected that you attend all classes and be on time except for excused emergencies.

Excused absences are given for professor mandated activities or legally required activities such as emergencies or military assignments. It is the policy of the University to excuse absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required class work that may fall on religious holidays. Unavoidable personal emergencies, including (but not limited to) serious illness; delays in getting to class because of accidents, etc.; deaths and funerals, and hazardous road conditions will be excused.

If you are obtaining financial assistance (TA, STAP, FA, VA, Scholarship, etc.) to pay all or part of your tuition cost, you must follow your funding agency/institution's policy regarding "I" (Incomplete) grades unless the timeline is longer than what the University policy allows then you must adhere to the University policy. Students who receive Financial Aid must resolve/complete any "I" (Incomplete) grades by the end of the term or he/she may be placed on "financial aid probation." If the "I" grade is not resolved/completed by the end of the following term, the student's Financial Aid may be suspended making the student ineligible for further Financial Aid.

Students are responsible for meeting the guidelines of Tuition Assistance and Veterans Assistance. See the education counselor at your local education center for a complete description of your TA or VA requirements.

### **Academic Integrity and Student Conduct**

Academic integrity means honesty and responsibility in scholarship. Academic assignments exist to help students learn; grades exist to show how fully this goal is attained. Therefore all work and all grades should result from the student's own understanding and effort.

Academic misconduct is any act which improperly affects the evaluation of a student's academic performance or achievement. Misconduct occurs when the student either knows or reasonably should know that the act constitutes misconduct. Academic misconduct includes: cheating and using unauthorized materials on examinations and other assignments; improper collaboration, submitting the same assignment for different classes (self-plagiarism); fabrication, forgery, alteration of documents, lying, etc...in order to obtain an academic advantage; assisting others in academic misconduct; attempting to commit academic misconduct; destruction of property, hacking, etc...; intimidation and interference with integrity process; and plagiarism. All students should review the Student's Guide to Academic Integrity at [http://integrity.ou.edu/students\\_guide.html](http://integrity.ou.edu/students_guide.html)

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. All students should review policies regarding student conduct at <http://studentconduct.ou.edu/>

### **Accommodation Statement**

The University of Oklahoma is committed to making its activities as accessible as possible. For accommodations on the basis of disability, please contact your local OU Site Director.

### **Adjustment for Pregnancy/Childbirth-Related Issues**

Should you need modifications or adjustments to your course requirements because of documented pregnancy-related or childbirth-related issues, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss. Generally, modifications will be made where medically necessary and similar in scope to accommodations based on temporary disability. Please see <http://www.ou.edu/content/eoo/faqs/pregnancy-faqs.html>.

## **Title IX Resources**

For any concerns regarding gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, stalking, or intimate partner violence, the University offers a variety of resources, including advocates on-call 24/7, counseling services, mutual no-contact orders, scheduling adjustments, and disciplinary sanctions against the perpetrator. Please contact the Sexual Misconduct Office at [smo@ou.edu](mailto:smo@ou.edu) or (405) 325-2215 (8-5), or the Sexual Assault Response Team at (405) 615 -0013 (24/7) to report an incident. To learn more about Title IX, please visit the Institutional Equity Office's website at <http://www.ou.edu/content/eoo.html>

## **Course Policies**

Advanced Programs policy is to order books in paperback if available. Courses, dates, and professors are subject to change. Please check with your OU Site Director. Students should retain a copy of any assignments that are mailed to the professor for the course. Advanced Programs does not provide duplicating services or office supplies.

Any and all course materials, syllabus, lessons, lectures, etc. are the property of professor teaching the course and the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma and are protected under applicable copyright.

For more information about Advanced Programs, visit our website at: <http://www.goou.ou.edu/>

## INSTRUCTOR VITA

Aparna Mitra, Ph.D.

### Education

Ph.D., Political Economy, University of Texas at Dallas

### Current Positions

- Presidential Teaching Fellow in Honors, 2016-18
- Associate Professor of Economics, Department of Economics, University of Oklahoma
- Director, Advanced Program in Economics, Department of Economics, University of Oklahoma

### Frequently Taught Advanced Programs Courses

- ECON 5990 Labor Economics
- ECON 5990 Discrimination in Labor Markets
- ECON 5033 Managerial Economics I
- ECON 5990 Poverty, Income Inequality, and Public Policy
- ECON 5990 Economics and Public Policy

### Major Areas of Teaching and Research Interest

- Labor Economics
- Economics of Race and Gender
- Gender and Labor Markets in Developing Countries
- Economics of Aging
- Economic Development in India
- Social Economics

### Representative Publications and Presentations

- "Indian Gaming in Oklahoma: Implications for Community Welfare," with Nicholas Moellman, *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 45, 2013
- "Gender Inequality and the Spread of HIV-AIDS in India," with Dipanwita Sarkar, *International Journal of Social Economics*, Issue 6, 2011
- "Demographics of the Sandwich Generation by Race and Ethnicity in the United States," with Tiffany Cravey, *Journal of Socio-Economics*, forthcoming, 2011
- "Demographics and living arrangements of the minority elderly in the United States," with Mark C. Bicket, *Applied Economics Letters*, Volume 16, Issue 10, July 2009
- "The Paternity Leave in Iceland: Implications for gender equality in the labor market," with Bjorn Thor Arnarson, *Applied Economics Letters*, October 2008
- "The Status of Women among the Scheduled Tribes in India," *Journal of Socio-Economics*, Vol. 37, Issue 3, June 2008
- "Trends in Literacy Rates and Schooling among the Scheduled Tribe Women in India," with Pooja Singh, *International Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 35, Issue 1&2, February, 2008
- "Human Capital Attainment and Gender Empowerment: The Kerala Paradox," with Pooja Singh, *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 88, No. 5, December, 2007
- "Human Capital Attainment and Women's Status in the Labor Market: The Kerala Puzzle," with Pooja Singh, *Journal of Economic Issues*, Vol. XL, No. 3, 2006
- "Access to Supervisory Jobs and the Gender Wage Gap among Professionals," *Journal of Economic Issues*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 2003

### **Conference Presentations**

- “Intimate Partner Violence and Women’s Mental Health in India,” Southern Economic Association, November 2013
- “Son Preference in India: Implications for Gender Development,” 14<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Social Economics, Glasgow, Scotland, June 2012
- “Single Mothers and the Contributions of Nonresidential Fathers,” Southern Economic Association, Washington, DC, November 2011
- “Gender Violence and Women’s Mental Health in India,” 13<sup>th</sup> World Congress for Social Economics, Montreal, Canada, June 2010
- “Gender Inequality and the Spread of HIV/AIDS in India,” Southwestern Economics Association, Houston, April 2010
- “The Aging Population in India,” Southern Economic Association, Washington, D.C., November 2008

### **Representative Honors and Awards Received**

- Presidential Teaching Fellow in Honors
- Patten Award for Outstanding Teaching in the Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences, 2013
- Outstanding Undergraduate Economics Professor, Department of Economics, 2011
- Most Inspiring Faculty, OU Athletes, 2011
- Presidential “Dream Course” Award, University of Oklahoma, 2009
- Presidential Distinguished Faculty Mentoring Program, University of Oklahoma, fall, 2008, 2009

### **Major Professional Affiliations**

- Association for Social Economics
- Society for the Advancement of Behavioral Economics
- Southwest Regional Director, Association for Social Economics, 2010-
- President, Southwestern Economics Association, 2004-2005