Honors SS 1520 The Rich and the Rest of Us Course Syllabus:
Causes and Consequences of Inequality and Poverty
Spring 2019

An Introduction to the Professor: Michael Vaughan

I am currently a professor of economics and Director of WSU’s Center for the Study of Poverty and Inequality. Previously, I served as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs from 2004 to 2015. In that capacity, it was my pleasure to serve as the university’s chief academic officer leading a team of 2,609 full-time and part-time faculty and staff that serve more than 26,000 WSU students.

I was hired at Weber State University as an Assistant Professor of Economics in 1981. On my first weekend on campus, I walked around the duck pond; yes, it was here in 1981. I subsequently became chair of the Department of Economics. I was later asked to serve as Dean of the Goddard School of Business and Economics. I earned a bachelor’s degree and master’s degree from the University of Arkansas and a Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska. Those schools once had good football teams, but that is a different discussion. At one time, I was also appointed as Pew Trust Fellow at Princeton University.

I have done my share of traditional academic research, and I have contributed around a hundred editorials to edit the Ogden Standard Examiner. For recreation, I don’t do enough. I hike. Now and then, I run, although some people would not call it running. I ski and bike, and when I bike it is most often on a mountain bike. I cook and love to talk cooking, but I hate it when people call me a gourmet. On the other hand, if you need to know how to make a roux, I can tell you how to make a roux.

Course Description:

Here are some facts about economic inequality.
• On any winter day, more than half a million people are homeless in the United States. A 10 percent annual tax increase on the ten richest Americans would raise enough money to provide housing for every homeless person.
• In 2011, each of the Koch brothers made $3 million per hour. Presently, more than 3 million workers make $7.25 an hour or less.
• The poorest 47 percent of Americans have no wealth. In fact, their debts exceed their assets. This means that almost half of the people living in the United States are broke.
• Out of 141 countries, the United States has the 4th-highest level of wealth inequality in the world. The only countries with greater inequality are Russia, the Ukraine, and Lebanon.

The rise in income inequality and wealth inequality in the United States over the last three decades is a critically important phenomenon. It would be difficult to find a major newspaper that isn’t printing several stories about inequality every week. Many of the 2016 presidential candidates spoke about the issue of economic inequality. Indeed, the topic has been featured on the covers of a number of national magazines.

The focus of this Honors SS 1520 The Rich and the Rest of Us: Causes and Consequences of Inequality and Poverty is:

1. The Measurement and Trends of Inequality
2. The Question of What is a Just Distribution of Income and Wealth?
3. Causes of Inequality: How Did the Wealthy Get Money and Why Do the Poor Have None?
4. Depictions and Depicting Inequality
5. The 1 Percent and How They Got There
6. The Consequences of Inequality
7. Where Do We Go: What are the Policy Alternatives?

COURSE ROAD MAP: An Outline of Every Class Meeting

Measurement and Trends
First Class Meeting: January 8: Introduction

In the first class meeting, we will review the structure and expectations for the course and view the film *Inequality for All*.

Second Class Meeting: January 15: Looking at the Data

Pre-class Readings


What is a Just Distribution?

Third Class Meeting: January 22: Issues of Justice

In this class meeting, professor David Read will join us to discuss issues of justice.

[Accessibility score: Low Click to improve Readings Actions](#) for Professor Read's class are available here.

Looking at the Causes of Inequality

Fourth Class Meeting: January 29: Mobility

Pre-class Readings

modern-american dream-attainable/the-numbers-show-rags-to-riches-happens-only-in-movies (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.

Gregory Clark “Your Ancestors, Your Fate.” (Opinion piece, Feb. 2014). http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/21/your-fate-thank-your-ancestors/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=2 (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.


View the film Waiting for Superman

- Fifth Class Meeting: February 5: Causes of Poverty and Inequality

Pre-class Readings

These readings are optional.

Colin Gordon, “Growing Apart A Political History of American Inequality,” Parts 1-4,

1. The Union Difference: Labor Policy and American Inequality (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.
2. The Bare Minimum: Labor Standards and American Inequality (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.
3. The Perils of Private Welfare: Job-Based Benefits and American Inequality (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.
4. A Tattered Safety Net: Social Policy and American Inequality (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.


View the “Triangle Fire,” The American Experience.

**Depictions and Depicting Inequality**

- Sixth Class Meeting: February 12: Moving Away From the Data (For A While)

In Class

View the film *Wasteland*.

- Seventh Class Meeting: February 19: Introduction to Visual Literacy

Both our understanding of and attitudes toward poverty and inequality are deeply influenced by visual images. At this juncture of the course, K Stevenson, Professor of Visual Arts, will join us for a three-session discussion on visual literacy and depictions of income inequality.

- Eighth Class Meeting: February 26: Introduction to the Visual Project and Work Session

Professor Stevenson will continue the discussion and introduce the project that students will complete.
March 4\textsuperscript{th} – SPRING BREAK

- Ninth Class Meeting: March 11: Critique and Exhibition of the Project

Students will present their visual arts projects.

Poverty and Inequality in Ogden, Utah

- Tenth Class: March 19: The Ogden Economy

This class meeting will consist of a lecture and discussion of the Ogden economy.

The Rich and How They Got There

- Eleventh Class Meeting: March 26: The Top of the Distribution and How They Got There

Pre-class Readings

Mankiw, N. Gregory, “Defending the One Percent” \textit{Journal of Economic Perspectives}, Summer, 2013. \url{http://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/jep.27.3.21} (Links to an external site.)


These readings are optional.

Colin Gordon, “Growing Apart A Political History of American Inequality,” Parts 5-7,

1. Who Pays? Taxes and American Inequality (Links to an external site.)
2. Wolves of Wall Street: Financialization and American Inequality (Links to an external site.)
3. **Fatter Cats: Executive Pay and American Inequality** (Links to an external site.)


In Class

*View The Inside Job.*

**The Consequences of Inequality**

1. Twelfth Class Meeting: April 2: Women and Children and Poverty and a Brief Look at Health Issues

Pre-class Readings


The following readings are optional.


In Class

View Paycheck to Paycheck.

Optional -- view the movie Sicko.

Where to Go

- Thirteenth Class Meeting: April 9: Policy and Other Alternatives

Pre-class Readings


The following readings are optional.


Optional

View *The Insider*.

Work on final exam as a group.

**FINAL CLASS MEETING**

- Fourteenth Class Meeting: April 16

**CLASS PRESENTATION PORTION OF FINAL**

**Graded Assignments and Examinations**

1) (15 Points) For this assignment, read the article by Leah Goodman, “As Inequality Soars, One Community Shows the Way, *Newsweek*, September 24, 2015.


Write an essay of 600 to 800 words that presents a critique of the article. Use the rubric at the end of this section to structure your essay.

2) (15 Points) For this assignment, and subsequent essay assignments, select an article that relates to one or more causes of economic inequality. Write an essay of 600 to 800 words that presents a critique of the article. Use the rubric at the end of this
section to structure your essay. Submit your essay along with a link to the article you select online by February 12. *The New York Times* is distributed free on campus in multiple locations including the Library, Student Union and Wattis Business Building. The New York Times is an excellent source for articles relating to different dimensions of economic inequality.

3) (20 Points) Midterm Examination

4) (15 Points) Visual Project – The complete details will be given in class.

5) (15 Points) For this assignment, select an article that relates to the economic situation in Ogden, Utah. Write an essay of 600 to 800 words that presents a critique of the article. Use the rubric at the end of this section to structure your essay.

6) (15 Points) For this assignment, select an article that relates to policies to address economic inequality. Write an essay of 600 to 800 words that presents a critique of the article. Use the rubric at the end of this section to structure your essay.

7) (15 Points) Class participation consists of more than attendance. Much of the learning in the class takes place during classroom discussions. We will discuss the articles that we read and the movies that we view in class. The rubric at the end of this section is a useful guide for preparing for class discussions.

When students are not prepared they cannot contribute to the overall learning process. This affects not only the individual but their peers who count on them as well. It is essential to be prepared for class and take part in the discussions. In particular, you should read all of the material labeled “pre-class reading” before class. In most cases, we will discuss the movies we view in the following class meeting. For this reason, you should reflect upon the movies after class and make a few notes to guide your comments in the subsequent class meeting. You should also share with the class information you have found outside of class that is relevant to the course. This class will be much more interesting for all of us if everyone in class takes part. In fact, the ability of the class to learn is greatly enhanced by hearing, thinking about and being challenged by
different perspectives. I will do everything I can to make it as comfortable as possible for you to participate in class.

8) (20 Points) Final Examination

**Grading Rubric for Essays and Class Discussions**

Your writing assignments and classroom discussions will typically involve an analysis of an article or essay. In class discussion will focus upon articles, essays and movies. This rubric provides a guide to help you prepare you analyses. As an example, I will apply some dimensions of the rubric to the movie *Inequality for All*. This is a movie that we will view during our first class meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary: You should begin with a summary. This is not a complete review of the work. The focus should be on the most important points.</td>
<td>Your summary identifies two or more central points of the work in question. For example, in the movie <em>Inequality for All</em>, one of Robert Reich’s major points is that inequality subverts the democratic system because the wealthy have disproportionate power to influence the process. (Note, that the point used in this example is not the only central point in the movie <em>Inequality for All</em>, but it is a central point worthy of analysis.)</td>
<td>Your summary identifies a point that isn’t irrelevant but isn’t one of the most critical points.</td>
<td>Your summary identifies a point that was too general. For example, movie <em>Inequality for All</em> is about economic inequality. Alternatively, you misstate a point. For example, you incorrectly state that wealth inequality has decline recent decades. Alternatively, your summary identifies a point that is trivial to the work in question. For example, the movie contains scenes of Robert Reich teaching a college class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis: I suggest that you think of</td>
<td>The organization of the argument (either make or</td>
<td>The organization of the argument</td>
<td>The argument is vague</td>
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your analysis in one of two ways. First, you make an argument. By this I mean that you take the central point identified in your summary and provide evidence to support why you agree with the point. Second, you break an argument. By this I mean that you take the central point identified in your summary and provide evidence to support why you disagree with the point.

The evidence selected is highly relevant to the argument and is presented accurately. If a theory is presented, the theory is relevant for the argument and accurately described. The argument logically leads to the conclusion.

Conclusions:

The conclusion is clearly stated and connections to the evidence and conclusion are clear and relevant. The underlying logic is explicit.

Presentation:

The paper or discussion is coherently organized and the logic is easy to follow. For a written paper, there are no spelling or grammatical errors. The writing is clear and argument is simply a restatement of the argument presented in the originally work. The organization may be weak. The evidence may be missing or not generally relevant to the argument. There may be errors in the logic use

The conclusion is clearly stated and connections to evidence and conclusion are generally clear. Minor errors in logic are present.

The paper or discussion is poorly organized and difficult to follow. The analysis does not flow logically from one part to another. There is superfluous or redundant information. There are
Academic Dishonesty

The WSU Student Code states, “Students at Weber State University assume the personal obligation to conduct themselves in a manner which is compatible with the University's role as a public institution of higher education. By enrolling at Weber State University, students agree to maintain certain standards of conduct, which if violated, may result in the imposition of sanctions or other forms of University discipline.”

The Student Code further states that students are expected to:

Maintain academic ethics and honesty. To this end, the following activities are specifically prohibited:
a) Cheating, which includes but is not limited to the following examples:
i. Copying from another student’s test;
ii. Using materials during a test not authorized by the person giving the test;
iii. Collaborating with any other person during a test without authorization;
iv. Knowingly obtaining, using, buying, selling, transporting, or soliciting in whole or in part the contents of any test without authorization of the appropriate University official;
v. Bribing any other person to obtain any test;
vi. Soliciting or receiving unauthorized information about any test;
vii. Substituting for another student or permitting any other person to substitute for oneself to take a test;
viii. Knowingly obtaining academic credit for work that is not one's own regardless of the source of the work;
ix. Knowingly involved in arranging fraudulent academic credit or...
false transcripts.
b) Plagiarism, which is the unacknowledged (uncited) use of any other person’s or group’s ideas or work. This includes purchased or borrowed papers;
c) Collusion, which is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing work offered for credit;
d) Falsification, which is the intentional and unauthorized altering or inventing of any information or citation in an academic exercise, activity, or record-keeping process;
e) Giving, selling, or receiving unauthorized course or test information;
f) Using any unauthorized resource or aid in the preparation or completion of any course work, exercise, or activity;
g) Infringing on the copyright law of the United States which prohibits the making of reproductions of copyrighted material except under certain specified conditions.
The complete WSU Student Code may be found at: http://www.weber.edu/ppm/Policies/6-22_StudentCode.html

**Students with Disabilities**

Any student requiring accommodations or services due to a disability must contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in Room 181 of the Student Services Center (or Room 221 at the Davis Campus). SSD can also arrange to provide course materials (including this syllabus) in alternative formats upon request. Contact SSD by phone at 801-626-6413 - Ogden; or 801-395-3442 - Davis

Or email ssd@weber.edu

For Course Summary and Dates, Please check Canvas