Economics 405 – Economic Models of Discrimination

Course Description and Course Objectives: Not all difference results from discrimination. Not all discrimination results in observable differences. This course focuses on understanding issues of difference and discrimination associated primarily with race, but also other markers of difference, including gender, sexual orientation, national origin, etc. A critical skill for economic analysis of discrimination is econometric method, and so in this course we will look carefully at the ways in which econometrics is used to address questions of discrimination, and critically evaluate these models and the studies that rely upon them.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

• Understand different approaches to discrimination research in Economics and other social science disciplines

• Describe the legal framework of discrimination enforcement in the United States

• Explain the standard economic models of discrimination

• Critically examine the research findings that rely upon economic models of discrimination

• Understand the limitations and critiques of empirical models of discrimination

SUGGESTED TEXT: Course readings will be available on D2L. An econometrics reference is a useful supplemental text.

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

Grading Policy

Grades will be marked A through E according to the University Policies and grading systems. Each student’s course grade for Economics 405 will be based upon weekly response papers and a final group project, as well as in-class discussion and participation with the following weights:

Class Discussion & Participation (10%)
Response Papers (55%)
Final Project (35%)

Students are expected to be active participants in class and engage with the material assigned to be discussed during the class.
For each paper assigned and discussed, students will write a response paper that is ~2 pages long. The response paper will include the student’s initial thoughts regarding the paper, its methods and results, as well as 2-3 specific questions about the paper for discussion in class.

The final project is a group project among groups of 2-3 students. The group will pick an additional research paper to read and evaluate from a list provided by the instructor. The group will be required to write a final paper of 5-8 pages that discusses the methods and findings of the research paper along with their group evaluation/critique of the paper itself. Each group will provide a short presentation of the research paper and their evaluation in the final two weeks of class.

There is no final exam in this course.

**Grading Scale:**

- 90-100 A
- 80-89 B
- 70-79 C
- 60-69 D
- 59 and Below E

**Late Assignment Policy**
Response papers are due 48 hours before the class in which we discuss the paper. Late papers are accepted for 10 percentage points off (so a maximum grade of 90%) if less than 24 hours late, 20 percentage points off if between 24 and 48 hours late, and 50 percentage points if received 48 hours or more after due.

The response papers are the best preparation for class discussion, so missing response paper assignments may also impact a student’s ability to engage with the material during class.

**Class Discussions Philosophy**
The topics that are covered in this class are often difficult, not just intellectually but emotionally. While I expect there to be rigorous discussion and disagreement in the course of our class discussions, I ask that you engage in discussion with care and empathy for the other members in the classroom. In this class, we will not shy away from the uncomfortable. Critically examining and assessing our assumptions how they reflect our values is an activity vital to living an authentic life that we engage in during this class. I urge you to have the courage to confront and discuss the uncomfortable in this class. In exchange for your courage, I will work to ensure a classroom environment that supports your taking these intellectual and emotional risks.

**Other**

**The prerequisite for this course is Econ. 300 or 361.**

Class will begin promptly at the scheduled starting time. Be certain that your cell phone is turned off. Your courteous in this manner will be appreciated by others. PLEASE NOTE: Since showing up late and leaving early, checking/playing with cell phones, etc., is de facto disruptive to the class, students who disrupt the class in this or any other manner may have their class discussion and participation grade affected.

Due to COVID-19, Class attendance is not required but is strongly encouraged. Class participation is required. Any student who is unable to attend The subject matter is analytical in nature and it is imperative to keep up with the course material. Last minute cramming is not successful.

Students who wish to appeal the grade they received on a response paper must do so within two working days of
the date that the graded paper is returned in class. Students are encouraged to

Students are expected to comply with the Student Code of Academic Integrity which prohibits academic dishonesty (please see http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/policies-and-codes/code-academic-integrity). The penalty for cheating is a failing grade in the course and a recommendation for expulsion from the University.

It is the University’s goal that learning experiences be as accessible as possible. Students with disabilities who wish to request special accommodations need to do so via the procedures established by the University’s Disability Resource Center (520-621-3268). Please see http://drc.arizona.edu for relevant details.

The University seeks to promote a safe environment where students and employees may participate in the educational process without compromising their health, safety, or welfare (for details please see http://policy.arizona.edu/education-and-student-affairs/threatening-behavior-students). The Student Code of Conduct prohibits threats of physical harm to any member of the University community, including to one’s self.

The University is committed to creating and maintaining an environment free of discrimination (please see http://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/nondiscrimination-and-anti-harassment-policy). All members of the University community are responsible for participating in creating a campus environment free from all forms of discrimination and for cooperating with University officials who investigate allegations of policy violations.

Minor revisions in course policies may be made at the instructor’s discretion.

**Feedback:**

All assignments and assessments that are completed and received by the due date will be graded and associated grades will be posted in the Grades tool within 7 days of the end of each module. Please note that I generally do not begin to grade an assignment until on or after they are all turned in since it is my preference to grade all students’ submissions at one time.

NOTE: You are expected to retain an electronic copy of all work submitted. If transmission of the work fails, you are expected to "resend" the document under our directions. Assignments will be submitted in Desire2Learn (D2L) either through Discussion Board forum postings or via the Assignments tool. You are expected to verify your own D2L responses by returning to the appropriate place in D2L after the work has been posted.

**Syllabus, Schedule, and Assignment Changes:**

NOTE: Information contained in this course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policies, may be subject to change at the discretion of the instructor with proper notice to the students.
COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

Introduction: (1.5 weeks):
Class 1 (Wednesday, Jan 13): What is discrimination? Equality vs Equity; Implicit Bias; Legal Enforcement
- Primer on Civil Rights laws
- Statistical vs. Taste-based discrimination
- Other models of discrimination

Class 2 (Wednesday, Jan 20): Introduction to Statistical methods; Experiments
- Bertrand and Duflo, Field Experiments on Discrimination
- TBA (second paper)

Class 3 (Monday, Jan 25): Class discussion on Bertrand & Duflo. TBA

Education/Employment’ (3.5 weeks):
Class 4 (Wednesday, Jan. 27): Introduction: observational data basic methods and interpretation of regressions; Causality

Class 5 (Monday, Feb. 1): DUE: Reflection paper on Bertrand and Mullainathan
Class 6 (Wednesday, Feb. 3): Class Discussion on Bertrand and Mullainathan

Paper 2: Carlana, Implicit Stereotypes: Evidence from Teachers’ Gender Bias, QJE (2019)
Class 7 (Monday, Feb. 8): DUE: Reflection paper on Carlana
Class 8 (Wednesday, Feb 10): Class Discussion on Carlana

Class 9 (Monday, Feb 15): DUE: Reflection paper on Darrity and Mason
Class 10 (Wednesday, Feb 17): Class Discussion on Darrity and Mason

Environment (2.5 weeks):
Class 11 (Monday Feb 22): What is environmental justice? Tiebout model and its application.

Paper 4: Currie et al., What Caused Racial Disparities in Particulate Exposure to Fall? New Evidence from the Clean Air Act and Satellite-Based Measures of Air Quality (NBER working paper 2019)
Class 12 (Wednesday, Feb. 24): DUE: Reflection paper on Currie et al.
Class 13 (Monday, March 1): Class Discussion on Currie et al.

**Paper 5: Banzhaf, et. Al: Environmental Justice: The Economics of Race, Place, and Pollution (working paper, 2019)**

Class 14 (Wednesday, March 3): DUE: Reflection paper on Currie et al.
Class 15 (Monday, March 8): Class Discussion on Currie et al.

**Health (2.5 weeks):**

Wednesday, March 10: Reading Day; No classes
Class 16 (Monday, March 15): Introduction: What is health justice?; health “capital” model

Class 17 (Wednesday, March 17): DUE: Reflection paper on Alsan et al.
Class 18 (Monday, March 22): Class Discussion on Alsan et al.

**Papers 7 & 8: Schulman et al., The Effect of Race and Sex on Physicians' Recommendations for Cardiac Catheterization, NJEM 1999; Greenwood, et al., Physician–patient racial concordance and disparities in birthing mortality for newborns, PNAS (2020)**
Class 19 (Wednesday, March 24): DUE: Reflection paper on Schulman et al. & Greenwood et al.
Class 20 (Monday, March 29): Class Discussion on Schulman et al. & Greenwood et al.

**Criminal Justice (3.5 weeks)**

Class 21 (Wednesday, March 31): Intro: Becker model and critique

Class 22 (Monday, April 5): DUE: Reflection paper on Ayres & Waldfogel
Class 23 (Wednesday, April 7): Class Discussion on Ayres & Waldfogel

Class 24 (Monday, April 12): DUE: Reflection paper on Ayres & Waldfogel
Class 25 (Wednesday, April 14): Class Discussion on Ayres & Waldfogel

Class 24 (Monday, April 19): DUE: Reflection paper on Barnes

**Wednesday, April 21: Reading Day; No classes**
Class 25 (Monday, April 26): Class Discussion on Barnes

**Round-up (1.5 weeks):**
Wednesday, April 28- Wednesday, May 5) (Class 28-30)

Group presentations on an additional paper (from a list), along with a 3-5 page synopsis of the paper: the context, the question(s), the findings, and a discussion of implications / limitations / critiques.

Final project paper is due on May 13 at 1:00pm (the time of the final exam).