

# Econ 69a Economics of Race and Gender

## Fall 2022

### Contact Details

Professor Brainerd (pronouns: she/her/hers)

Office location: Sachar 202

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### Teaching Assistant:

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### Meeting Times

#### Classes

Class meeting times: Mondays and Wednesdays, 8:30-9:50am. The class is in-person with no option for online access. Class meetings will not be recorded.

#### Optional recitations

TBA

#### Student Hours

Tuesdays 9:30-11:30am, Sachar 202. I welcome your visits during student hours, whether it is to ask a question about the course material or just to stop by to say hello. You can also contact me by email with questions or to schedule a meeting outside of my office hours. I will respond as quickly as possible, at most within 24 hours on weekdays (48 hours on weekends).

### Accommodations

Brandeis seeks to create a learning environment that is welcoming and inclusive of all students, and I want to support you in your learning. If you think you may require disability accommodations, you will need to work with Student Accessibility Support (SAS) (781-736-3470, [access@brandeis.edu](mailto:access@brandeis.edu)). You can find helpful student FAQs and other resources on the [SAS website](#), including guidance on how to know whether you might be eligible for support from SAS. If you already have an accommodation letter from SAS, please provide me with a copy as soon as you can so that I can ensure effective implementation of accommodations for this class. In order to coordinate exam accommodations, ideally you should provide the accommodation letter at least 48 hours before an exam.

### Course Description

This course focuses on issues of difference and discrimination associated with race and gender in the labor market. In this course, we use the theoretical and empirical tools of microeconomics to analyze the diverse

economic experiences of individuals and groups and to explore sources of and solutions to persistent inequalities.

The subject matter of this course is vast and rich, and cannot be covered in a single course. This course has thus been narrowed down to a microeconomic analysis of race and gender in the labor market, and the U.S. labor market in particular. Students who are interested in going beyond this relatively narrow focus are welcome to meet with me to discuss further reading.

The course also presents us with a further challenge. Economics as a discipline has only recently begun to address systemic racism in the profession and in economic research, and economic scholarship on race has too often been marginalized in the field. Moreover, almost all of the research done by economists uses binary categories such as 'male' and 'female' or 'Black' and 'White', even as it is clear that such categories are far from binary. While acknowledging this fundamental problem, the course of necessity discusses this research. I hope we will have an ongoing conversation about this issue and some ways that economists and other social scientists may begin to address this challenge.

**Course approach:** Economics 69a provides an introduction to the economics of race and gender with an emphasis on policy issues. We will learn and use the tools of microeconomic analysis to understand how economists model individual decision-making, and to gain insight into how microeconomic theory can explain some of the changes experienced by women, men and individuals of different races and ethnicities in the United States in the postwar period.

Some of the questions we will examine include:

- Why do women often specialize in household work in married households? How and why has this changed over time?
- How did welfare reform in the United States impact low-income women?
- Do pronatalist policies work to increase fertility rates?
- Do parental leave policies help or hurt women's careers?
- Why do women earn less than men?
- Why do Black Americans earn less than Whites?
- What has been the impact of affirmative action on employment and wages of targeted groups?

**Learning Goals:**

The primary goal of the course is to develop your ability to study, analyze and ultimately reach informed opinions about the numerous policy questions that arise with respect to race and gender in the labor market. To help develop this ability, we will study these policy issues drawing on economic models of the family, fertility, and labor markets, examination of the role of labor market institutions, and empirical evidence on these issues.

Specific learning outcomes: after successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- apply and explain at an introductory level the economic models that relate to family and labor market decision-making
- describe how economic theory and evidence apply to and explain the trends in the economic experiences of different groups in the postwar period
- construct, defend, and analyze important labor market and family policy issues
- demonstrate proficiency with simple quantitative and analytical tools useful in understanding the changing roles of women and men and nonwhites in the economy

### **Credit Hours:**

Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of nine hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussions, preparation for the exams, etc.

## **Course Requirements**

**Course Prerequisite:** Econ 2a or Econ 10a

**Course materials:** There is no required textbook for the course. Chapters from relevant textbooks and articles from economics journals and the popular press are required reading and will be posted on the course website on Latte. You are responsible for all assigned reading whether or not the material is covered explicitly in class. Exams will include questions about the required readings.

**Course requirements:** Students will be evaluated on the following basis:

In-class written assignments	10%
Problem sets (5)	10%
Thoughts & questions (TQs)	15%
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Final exam (cumulative)	25%

**Attendance:** Class attendance is required but not explicitly graded. Please arrive for class on time. If you need to join a class late or leave early, please notify me prior to class. It is expected that you will attend each class ready to discuss the readings.

**Participation:** Students are expected to prepare for each class session and to actively participate in class discussion. Class participation involves being regularly engaged in the discussion/lecture and making a positive contribution by asking thoughtful questions, sharing relevant experiences, requesting clarification and making comments. All forms of participation should be conducted in a manner that is respectful of fellow students and the professor.

**In-class written assignments:** These are short assignments written in small groups and graded on a credit/no credit basis. I expect to assign 6 in-class written exercises over the semester. If you submit 6 assignments, you will receive an "A" for this part of the course (5 is an A-, etc.). If you are absent from class that day you will get a 'no credit' for the assignment with no exceptions and no option to turn the assignment in later. I will not give advance warning of the in-class written assignments.

**Thoughts & questions (TQs):** TQs are responses to questions on the readings (and/or videos) that you will submit before class. Over the course of the semester you will write 9 TQs based on the reading for that class (you are welcome to write more than 9). The TQs will often be general questions such as "What did you find most interesting about the reading?" but will sometimes comprise more specific questions. You may also use the TQ as an opportunity to make connections between the readings and any videos assigned for the week, between the readings and your life or current events, or offer a critique. A TQ must be at least 150 words. You must submit TQs by 9pm the night before class.

The TQs will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. You will receive credit for responses that reflect a good-faith effort to write thoughtfully about the reading. If you submit 9 good-faith TQs by the end of the

course, you will receive an “A” for the TQ part of the course (8 TQs is an A-, 7 is a B+, 6 is a B, 5 is a B-, and so on). There will be 15 TQs posted during the semester, so you can decide which TQs to submit based on your interests and schedule.

**Problem sets:** Five problem sets will be due during the semester, on the dates listed below. Complete problem sets must be turned in by the deadline posted on Latte. *Late problem sets will not be accepted under any circumstances.* To accommodate illness and unforeseen conflicts, I will drop the lowest score among your problem sets in the grade calculation. In other words, you must turn in four of the five problem sets; alternatively, you can turn in all five problem sets and I will take the top four grades in calculating your problem set grade. The dropped grade can be used for any problem, but it is advisable to save it for medical or personal emergencies as only one grade will be dropped. Important: all homework should be your work and not the work of others. Work that is copied from another source and does not reflect your own efforts will receive zero points and will be submitted as academic dishonesty to the Academic Integrity Student Conduct Process.

**Exams:** No make-up exams will be given in this course. If you miss the first exam, the weight of that exam will be divided equally between the second exam and the final exam. If you miss the second exam, the weight will be added to the final exam weight. Please note that absence from an exam will be excused ONLY for a serious illness or family emergency that is appropriately documented; otherwise a grade of zero will be assigned. There are NO EXCEPTIONS to this rule.

**Cell phone policy:** I come to class to help you learn, and I assume that you are here because you want to learn. Using a cell phone to talk, text, email, or surf the internet is both disrespectful and distracting to me and to your fellow students. Because of this, the use of cell phones in class is strictly prohibited. If you must take a call due to an emergency situation, please leave the classroom.

IMPORTANT DATES FOR ECON 69a:

(Note that these dates are subject to change)

Problem set 1	Thursday Sept. 22
Problem set 2	Thursday Oct. 13
<b>Exam 1</b>	<b>Tuesday Oct. 18</b>
Problem set 3	Thursday Oct. 27
Problem set 4	Thursday Nov. 10
<b>Exam 2</b>	<b>Wednesday Nov. 16</b>
Problem set 5	Thursday Dec. 1
Final exam	TBA during final exam period

No class: Sept. 5, Sept. 26, Oct. 5, Oct. 10, Oct. 17, Nov. 23  
Brandeis Mondays (class will be held): Oct. 13, Oct. 18

## Important Policies and Resources

### **Academic Integrity**

Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. A student shall not submit work that is falsified or is not the result of the student's own effort. Infringement of academic integrity by a student subjects that student to serious penalties, which may include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension from the University or other sanctions. Please consult [Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities](#) for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work via TurnItIn.com or similar software to verify originality. A student who is in doubt regarding standards of academic integrity as they apply to a specific course or assignment should consult the faculty member responsible for that course or assignment before submitting the work. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Department of Student Rights and Community Standards. Citation and research assistance can be found at [Brandeis Library Guides - Citing Sources](#).

### **Classroom Health and Safety**

- Register for the [Brandeis Emergency Notification System](#). Students who receive an emergency notification while attending class should notify their instructor immediately. In the case of a life-threatening emergency, call 911. As a precaution, review [this active shooter information sheet](#).
- Brandeis provides [this shuttle service](#) for traveling across campus or to downtown Waltham, Cambridge and Boston.
- On the Brandeis campus, all students, faculty, staff and guests are required to observe the university's policies on physical distancing and mask-wearing to support the health and safety of all classroom participants. Review up to date [COVID-related health and safety policies](#) regularly.

### **Course Materials/Books/Apps/Equipment**

If you are having difficulty purchasing course materials, please make an appointment with your Student Financial Services or Academic Services advisor to discuss possible funding options, including vouchers for purchases made at the Brandeis Bookstore.

### **LATTE**

[LATTE](#) is the Brandeis learning management system. Login using your UNET ID and password. For LATTE help, contact [Library@brandeis.edu](mailto:Library@brandeis.edu).

### **Library**

[The Brandeis Library](#) collections and staff offer resources and services to support Brandeis students, faculty and staff. Librarians and Specialists from Research & Instructional Services, Public Services, Archives & Special Collections, Sound & Image Media Studios, MakerLab, AutomationLab, and Digital Scholarship Lab are available to help you through consultations and workshops.

### **Privacy**

To protect your privacy in any case where this course involves online student work outside of Brandeis password-protected spaces, you may choose to use a pseudonym/alias. You must share the pseudonym/alias with me and any teaching assistants as needed. Alternatively, with prior consultation, you may submit such work directly to me.

### **Student Support**

Brandeis University is committed to supporting all our students so they can thrive. If a student, faculty, or staff member wants to learn more about support resources, the [Support at Brandeis](#) webpage offers a comprehensive list that includes these staff colleagues you can consult, along with other support resources:

- The [Care Team](#)

- [Academic Services](#) (undergraduate)
- [Graduate Student Affairs](#)
- Directors of Graduate Studies in each department, School of Arts & Sciences
- Program Administrators for the Heller School and International Business School
- [University Ombuds](#)
- [Office of Equal Opportunity](#).

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

<b>Class #</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Problem set due</b>
1	Monday Aug. 29	Introduction and course overview	
2	Wednesday Aug. 31	Economics of the household	
3	Wednesday Sept. 7	Economics of the household	
4	Monday Sept. 12	Economics of the household	
5	Wednesday Sept. 14	Labor supply and labor force participation	
6	Monday Sept. 19	Labor supply and labor force participation	
7	Wednesday Sept. 21	Labor supply and labor force participation	1 (9/22)
8	Wednesday Sept. 28	Labor supply and labor force participation	
9	Monday Oct. 3	The economic approach to fertility	
10	Wednesday Oct. 12	The economic approach to fertility	
11	Thursday Oct. 13	The economic approach to fertility	2 (10/13)
	Tuesday Oct. 18	Exam 1	
12	Wednesday Oct. 19	The economic approach to fertility	
13	Monday Oct. 24	The economic approach to fertility	
14	Wednesday Oct. 26	Explaining wage gaps	3 (10/27)
15	Monday Oct. 31	Explaining wage gaps	
16	Wednesday Nov. 2	Explaining wage gaps	
17	Monday Nov. 7	Explaining wage gaps	
18	Wednesday Nov. 9	Explaining wage gaps	4 (11/10)
19	Monday Nov. 14	Explaining wage gaps	
19	Wednesday Nov. 16	Exam 2	
20	Monday Nov. 21	Economic approaches to discrimination	
21	Monday Nov. 28	Economic approaches to discrimination	
22	Wednesday Nov. 30	Economic approaches to discrimination	5 (12/1)
23	Monday Dec. 5	Economic approaches to discrimination	
24	Wednesday Dec. 7	Catch-up and review for final exam	

## Course outline and assigned readings

### I. Introduction

- Gary Becker, *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior*, pp. 3 - 14

### II. Economics of the household: economic approach to the family; costs and benefits of marriage and divorce

- Joyce Jacobsen, *The Economics of Gender*, Ch. 3 (including Appendix; focus on pp. 61-79 and 89-92)
- Video (10:01) Diana Strassmann, "What is Feminist Economics?"  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8eq\\_f5ET8TY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8eq_f5ET8TY)
- Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, "Marriage and Divorce: Changes and their Driving Forces," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Winter 2007 (focus on pp. 40-50)
- Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, "The Economic Case for Same-Sex Marriage," Bloomberg News, May 14, 2012
- Libertad Gonzalez and Alicia De Quinto, "Should Divorce Be Easier or Harder?" IZA World of Labor, 2021
- *Optional*: M.V. Lee Badgett et al., "LGBTQ Economics," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Spring 2021

*Discussion question: The gains from specialization: is Gary Becker's theory obsolete?*

### III. Labor supply and trends in labor force participation

- George Borjas, *Labor Economics*, pp. 21 - 64
- Robert A. Moffitt and Stephanie Garlow, "Did Welfare Reform Increase Employment and Reduce Poverty?" Stanford Center on Poverty & Inequality, 2018.
- Patricia M. Anderson, Kristin F. Butcher and Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, "Changes in Safety Net Use During the Great Recession," *American Economic Review Papers & Proceedings*, May 2015
- Ariel J. Binder and John Bound, "The Declining Labor Market Prospects of Less-Educated Men," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 2019.
- Jay Fitzgerald, "Declining Work Hours and the Rise in Young Men's Gaming," *NBER Digest*, Sept. 2017.
- *Optional*: Dora L. Costa, "From Mill Town to Board Room: The Rise of Women's Paid Labor," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 2000.
- *Optional*: N. Gregory Mankiw, "Why Aren't More Men Working?" *New York Times*, June 15, 2018

*Discussion question: Did welfare reform go too far? Or not far enough?*

### Policy application: Female labor supply and the design of parental leave policies

- Maya Rossin-Slater, "Maternity and Family Leave Policy," *Oxford Handbook of Women and the Economy* 2018.



- Clare Cain Miller, "When Family-Friendly Policies Backfire," *New York Times*, May 26, 2015.
- *Optional*: "How To Get Dads To Take Parental Leave?" NPR Morning Edition, Feb. 8, 2016 (3:51): <https://www.npr.org/2016/02/08/465726445/how-to-get-dads-to-take-parental-leave-seeing-other-dads-do-it>

*Discussion question: Should the U.S. implement a federal parental leave policy? If so, how should it be designed?*

#### **IV. The economic approach to fertility**

- Partha S. Dasgupta, "Population, Poverty and the Local Environment," *Scientific American*, Feb. 1995.

##### Policy application: do pronatalist policies work?

- Jonathan V. Last, "Make Boomsa for the Motherland!" *Slate.com*, April 25, 2013

##### Policy application: teenage fertility

- Phillip B. Levine, "Teenage Childbearing and Labor Market Implications for Women," *IZA World of Labor*, July 2014.

##### Policy application: economic consequences of contraceptive and abortion access

- Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, "On the Pill," *The Milken Institute Review*, 2001
- Chris Fleisher, "How IVF Changed Israel's Marriage Market," *AEA Research Highlights*, Feb. 12, 2021
- Caitlin Knowles Myers and Morgan Welch, "What Can Economic Research Tell Us About the Effect of Abortion Access on Women's Lives?" *Brookings Report*, Nov. 30, 2021

Discussion topic: *the economic effects of the Pill*

#### **V. Explaining wage gaps**

##### **A. Historical background**

- Joyce Jacobsen, *The Economics of Gender*, Ch. 14

##### **B. Occupational segregation**

- Joyce Jacobsen, *The Economics of Gender*, Ch. 6
- Claire Cain Miller, "Why Men Don't Want the Jobs Done Mostly by Women," *New York Times*, Jan. 4, 2017

##### **C. Differences in human capital: economics of schooling and labor market experience**

- George Borjas, *Labor Economics*, pp. 236 - 252
- Shelly Lundberg, "Educational Gender Gaps," *Southern Economic Journal*, 2020.

- Lisa D. Cook and Trevon D. Logan, “Racial Inequality,” *Economists for Inclusive Prosperity Research Brief*, June 2020.
- Garrett Anstreicher, Jason Fletcher and Owen Thompson, [“The Long-Run Impacts of Court-Ordered Desegregation,” Vox-EU, May 15, 2022](#)
- “Can You Move to Opportunity?” Econimate video (7:16)
- Justin Wolfers, “Why the New Research on Mobility Matters: An Economist’s View,” *New York Times*, May 4, 2015.
- Martha Bailey, “The Long-Run Benefits of Public Preschool,” AEA Research Highlights podcast, Dec. 21, 2021 (14:31)

*Discussion topic: the new math on campus*

*Discussion topic: strategies to reduce racial inequality*

## **VI. Economic approaches to labor market discrimination**

### **A. Theory and measurement**

- George Borjas, *Labor Economics*, pp. 385 – 398
- Mario Small, “Rethinking Racial Discrimination,” AEA Research Highlights podcast, June 24, 2020
- Christina Duff, “Female Musicians Fare Better When Heard But Not Seen,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 7, 1997
- Cecilia Rouse, “Gender Discrimination in the Labor Market” video (6 min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLZapTuSHTu-CeejcJGLVBLqNT-ipS0ldh&v=A3Nwi1VsF3o>
- Patrick Kline, Evan Rose and Christopher Walters, “Systemic Discrimination Among Large U.S. Employers,” 2021.

### **B. Explanations for changing gender and racial wage gaps**

- Henrik Kleven et al., “Child Penalties Across Countries: Evidence and Explanations,” *AER Papers and Proceedings*, 2019
- Cody Cook et al, “The Gender Earnings Gap in the Gig Economy,” *CATO Institute Research Brief*, June 20, 2018.

### **C. Evaluating policy solutions to labor market discrimination**

- Marie-Anne Valfort, “Do Anti-Discrimination Policies Work?” *IZA World of Labor*, 2018.
- Tim Hyde, “Can Temporary Affirmative Action Policies Have Lasting Effects? Hiring Regulations Can Lead to Fundamental Changes in How Employers Recruit,” *AEA Research Highlights*, July 2017.
- *Econimate* video: “Should Women Ask for More? The Ask Gap and Gender Pay Inequality”

*Discussion question: Should affirmative action be enforced? Or ended?*