Economics 69a: Economics of Race and Gender
Fall 2018

Professor Brainerd
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ebrainer@brandeis.edu

Office hours:
Tuesdays,
10:00 am - 12:00 noon

This course focuses on issues of difference and discrimination associated with race, ethnicity 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. Almost all of the research done by
economists uses fixed categories of ‘male’ and ‘female’ or ‘black’ and ‘white’, even as it has
become clear that such categories are far from fixed. While acknowledging this fundamental
problem, the course is of necessity organized around those categories. 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 description: 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 typically 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 pro-natalist policies work to increase fertility rates?
• Why do women earn less than men?
• Why do African 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 women’s, men’s and nonwhites’ economic experiences in the postwar period
• demonstrate proficiency with simple quantitative and analytical tools useful in understanding the changing roles of women, men and nonwhites in the economy.

Prerequisite: Economics 2a or Economics 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.

Course requirements: Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, discussions, problem sets, quizzes and a final exam). Students will be evaluated on the following basis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem sets (5)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts &amp; questions (TQs)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 1 (Tuesday, Oct. 23)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quiz 2 (Thursday, Nov. 15)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam (cumulative)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Attendance: Learning in this course is cumulative, with many topics building on previous topics. As a result, attendance is extremely important. Attendance will be taken in every class.

Thoughts & questions (TQs): TQs are brief responses to questions on the readings 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 confusing in the reading? but will sometimes comprise more specific questions. You must submit TQs by 4 pm the day before class via Google Forms.

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). You will be able to submit TQs for the readings for most classes. In most cases you can decide which TQs to submit, although for certain classes I may require all students in the class to submit a TQ.

Class participation: It is essential that you have done the readings before class and are prepared to actively participate in the class discussion about the readings. You will be graded on the
quality of your comments and your ability to respectfully engage your fellow students.

**Problem sets and exams:** Five problem sets will be due during the semester, on the dates listed below. Complete problem sets must be turned in at the beginning of class on the due date. *Late problem sets will not be accepted under any circumstances, including medical emergencies, printer malfunctions, track meets, and the failure of your roommate to turn your problem set in for you.* 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 set, but it is advisable to save it for medical or personal emergencies as only one grade will be dropped.

No make-up quizzes will be given in this course. Please note that absence from a quiz 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.

**Recitations:** Optional recitations on most Tuesdays, 6:30 - 7:20 pm, Lown 301

**Laptop, tablet and 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, tablet or laptop 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, tablets, and laptops in class is prohibited.* If you must take a call due to an emergency situation, please leave the classroom. If you are unable to take notes without the use of a laptop, please speak to me. Recording of my lectures is prohibited unless arranged in advance with me.

**Special accommodations:** If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately. Please keep in mind that reasonable accommodations are not provided retroactively.

**Academic integrity:** You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University *Rights and Responsibilities* for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at LTS - Library guides. If you have any questions about my expectations, please ask. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.
# Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class #</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Problem set due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thursday Aug. 30</td>
<td>Introduction and course overview</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tuesday Sept. 4</td>
<td>Economics of the household</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Thursday Sept. 13</td>
<td>Economics of the household</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tuesday Sept. 18</td>
<td>Economics of the household</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Thursday Sept. 20</td>
<td>Labor supply and labor force participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Thursday Sept. 27</td>
<td>Labor supply and labor force participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tuesday Oct. 2</td>
<td>Labor supply and labor force participation</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Thursday Oct. 4</td>
<td>Labor supply and labor force participation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tuesday Oct. 9</td>
<td>The economic approach to fertility</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Thursday Oct. 11</td>
<td>The economic approach to fertility</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Tuesday Oct. 16</td>
<td>The economic approach to fertility</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Thursday Oct. 18</td>
<td>The economic approach to fertility</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Tuesday Oct. 23</td>
<td>Quiz 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Thursday Oct. 25</td>
<td>The economic approach to fertility</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Tuesday Oct. 30</td>
<td>Explaining wage gaps</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Thursday Nov. 1</td>
<td>Explaining wage gaps</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Tuesday Nov. 6</td>
<td>Explaining wage gaps</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Thursday Nov. 8</td>
<td>Explaining wage gaps</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Tuesday Nov. 13</td>
<td>Explaining wage gaps</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Thursday Nov. 15</td>
<td>Quiz 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Tuesday Nov. 20</td>
<td>Explaining wage gaps</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Tuesday Nov. 27</td>
<td>Economic approaches to discrimination</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Thursday Nov. 29</td>
<td>Economic approaches to discrimination</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Tuesday Dec. 4</td>
<td>Economic approaches to discrimination</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Thursday Dec. 6</td>
<td>Economic approaches to discrimination</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Tuesday Dec. 11</td>
<td>Catch-up and review for final exam</td>
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</tbody>
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Course outline and assigned readings

I. Introduction

- Gary Becker, *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior*, pp. 3 - 14
- Optional: Joyce Jacobsen, *The Economics of Gender*, Ch. 2

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)
- Steven E. Landsburg, “Microwave Oven Liberation,” *Slate*, January 4, 2001

Class discussion: 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

Policy application: the welfare system in the United States


Class discussion: Did welfare reform go too far? Or not far enough?
Policy application: Female labor supply and the well-being of young children
• Summary of Baker et al., “Canada’s Universal Childcare Hurt Children and Families,” NBER Reporter, June 2006

Class discussion: Should the U.S. implement policies to encourage mothers with young children to work?

IV. The economic approach to fertility

• George Borjas, Labor Economics, pp. 77 - 83

Policy application: do population policies work?
• Jonathan V. Last, “Make Boomsa for the Motherland!” Slate.com, April 25, 2013

Class discussion: fertility control in developing countries

Policy application: teenage fertility

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

Class discussion: the economic effects of the Pill
C. Differences in human capital: economics of schooling and labor market experience


*Class discussion: the new math on campus*

*Class discussion: strategies to reduce racial inequality*

D. Explanations for changing gender and racial wage gaps


*Class discussion: gender differences in negotiation and competitiveness*
VI. Economic approaches to discrimination

A. Discrimination within the family


B. Labor market discrimination

- George Borjas, Labor Economics, pp. 385 - 398

C. Evaluating solutions

- Tim Hyde, “From the Archives: Can Temporary Affirmative Action Policies Have Lasting Effects?” American Economic Association research summary, April 2018

Class discussion: Should affirmative action be enforced? Or ended?

8